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# A New Testament Geography: Description, Perspectives, and Implications for the Field of Geography.

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A NEW TESTAMENT GEOGRAPHY: DESCRIPTION, PERSPECTIVES,  
AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FIELD OF GEOGRAPHY

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
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Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Geography and Anthropology

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## ABSTRACT

The general purpose of this study is to relate the fields of geography and religion at both the academic and the practical levels. Primarily, it investigates the New Testament description of the land and its human occupancy. Secondly, it identifies New Testament attitudes toward geography and suggests implications for its study and practice. It describes the geography, both physical and human, for each of the five classes of the document's book in a separate chapter.

The chapter on the synoptic gospels discusses mountains, weather, biogeography, agriculture, occupations, and urban geography. Four kinds of soil reveal different responses to the word. While the house of the wise builder stands against the storm, that of the foolish builder falls. In the gospel of John, one's attitude is more important than terrestrial location in the worship of God. The messiah is the true vine and the good shepherd.

In Acts, Paul is shipwrecked on the way to Rome. The early church holds possessions in common and distributes to the needy.

In the epistles, Paul uses the olive tree to illustrate God's dealings with Jews and Gentiles. Abraham looks for a city designed and built by God. Jerusalem above is a model for the earthly city. New heavens and a new earth are coming.

In Revelation, trumpet and bowl plagues devastate much land and water. The righteous and the wicked are harvested at the eschaton.

The conclusion identifies seven New Testament attitudes toward geography -- the distinction between the literal and the symbolic, teleology in creation, heavenly counterparts, the worlds above and below, the temporality of the world, the destiny of the world, and God as the author of geography. The conclusion also discusses implications for the field of geography. Humans as stewards of the creation are responsible to God. Both the study of specific cases and the formulation of general laws are proper activities. Both physical and human components may form a united geography. Geography has a place for both qualitative and quantitative statements. That the world is passing away may suggest directing research to worthy rather than trivial issues.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Purpose of Study**

The general purpose of this study is to relate the fundamental fields of geography and religion at both the academic and the practical levels. More specifically, the study analyzes the biblical New Testament in its geographical content and context. Primarily, it investigates the New Testament description of both nature or the land (as broadly conceived) and the human occupancy of the land. Secondly, it identifies New Testament attitudes toward the land and its occupancy and suggests implications for the study and the practice of geography.

#### **Introduction**

What are the relations between the contents of the major academic fields or, equivalently, the interactions within the universe of theoretical knowledge? Are these fields independent in some degree with no necessary connections or are some or all of them naturally related to each other? Due in part to the rapid growth of the content of knowledge, most academicians have become specialists. Even within one of the basic fields, the subdivisions are significant enough that communication with understanding among specialists is beyond reasonable likelihood. In order for each field to contribute more effectively to the whole,

it would be helpful to know how the advances in one field might impact the nature of research that would be conducted in another field. This dissertation is a partial attempt to relate two of the major academic fields.

Broadly we might categorize the major fields into three areas: natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities. The relations between fields within each area may be closer than those between fields in different areas. However, some fields on boundaries between areas might have more in common with a field in another area than with some fields in its area. Some fields may be more firmly rooted in one area, while others may stretch over two or all three areas.

It may also be useful to subdivide the three areas. For example, the natural sciences would include both the physical and the biological sciences. For another example, the humanities may contain literature, the fine arts, and religion/philosophy. By working at relatively high levels, we find the number of major academic fields to be rather small. In this discussion we are concerned with the academic fields only and not with the allied professional fields, which might be associated with one or more of the academic fields. For instance, the business curriculum could be under the field of economics and medicine under the fields of biology and chemistry.

Of this rather small number of major or primary fields then, this dissertation is an attempt to deal with only two

of them -- with geography and religion. These two fields are selected partly because of the interest and experience of the student. Although the author has not held a teaching position in any field and does not claim special expertise in any field, he has previously received a Ph.D. in religion. In addition, however, the choice of the field of religion is especially pertinent because of the unusual status of that field. Theology, perhaps properly a subfield within religion, has been called the queen of the sciences. The field of religion, as a whole (including theology) has its own specific subject matter; yet, more generally, it also permeates all the other fields as well. This dissertation then is primarily a dissertation in geography as viewed through the lens of the pervasive field of religion.

#### **Statement of Issue to be Addressed**

The issue of the dissertation is summarized above in the purpose paragraph. We wish to conduct a study of the connections between the two major academic fields of geography and religion. One may distinguish between religious geography, which is concerned with how human religious thought (often deriving from religious experience) influences perceptions of the world, and the geography of religions, which is concerned with the cultural and environmental associations of religion but not with inner

religious experience (Sopher 1981:518-19; Kong 1990:356-58; Park 1994:11, 18-19).

Because the dissertation has its focus on geography, we are concerned with the influence of religion or religious principles on geography rather than with the influence of geography on religion. That is, we are not concerned, for instance, with how the physical environment might influence the content or practice of religion in general or of a particular religion after the manner of Ellsworth Huntington or Ellen Semple (Kong 1990:357-58). Nor would the dissertation be classified as the geography of a religious tradition (biblical or other), whether physical or historical. That is, we are not primarily investigating the geography or geology of religious heartlands, such as Palestine or adjacent areas. Nor are we interested in the role of geography in historical events of a given period; we are not concerned with such things as the location of cities or the movements of economic goods, military troops or political leaders. The bearings of archaeological or linguistic research on this type of geography also fall outside our purview. (We do include some material in these classes as background for our main purpose.)

Rather we are interested in determining how the content of religious thought might affect the content of the subject matter of geography. That is, the project falls under the classification of religious geography, as described above.



However, we are not being religiously inclusive, so as to consider the effects of all or any religious teachings. Such a project would be too large for one dissertation. Instead we are investigating the issue for the religion of Christianity alone. Thus the selection of the specific focus of the study derives from a statement of faith. Christianity is selected as the most representative religious perspective -- not primarily because of its cultural, historical, or contemporary influence but because of its claims about what is true and what is significant in religious content. But one might also conduct a study similar to this one, using the insights of another religious tradition (e.g., Buddhism or Islam) for the field of geography.

In recent years a Christian perspective on geography has emerged among geographers (Park 1994:27-29). In this perspective Christianity is presented as a possible world view on the level with other world views such as Marxism, humanism or laboratory science. Not as irrational dogma does this view advance its position but rather as a view which needs to have its position scrutinized and justified as does any other view (Olliver 1989:107). Against this background the dissertation selects foundational Christian principles as the religious vehicle for consideration of impacts on the field of geography.

What source or sources shall we access to describe the content of Christian principles through which we may investigate the content of geography? A number of possibilities might be proposed. Among the many denominations and varieties in Christendom may be found statements of doctrine and practice. Many points in common may appear in these various sources but also many differences. We might also look at historical doctrinal development from the early patristic period through the medieval and Reformation periods all the way to the contemporary period of upheaval, eclecticism, and novelty. Especially we could look at the major doctrinal issues such as the nature of God, the nature of Christ, the nature of man, the church, sin, and salvation. Perhaps some consensus could be reached about what constitutes Christian principles.

However, most Christians would say that these historical developments rest ultimately on the initial primary documents -- in this case, the Bible as composed of Old and New Testaments. We might then attempt to look at the Bible as a whole and search it for content bearing on our topic. The Old Testament comprises slightly over 75% of the Bible; the smaller percentage for the New Testament makes it appealing as a confined and more manageable source. Additionally, although the entire Bible is the Christian Bible, the New Testament contains the focus of what is

distinctively Christian. It also has many quotations from and allusions to Old Testament passages; quite a number of Old Testament themes are embedded in and re-worked in the New Testament. For these reasons in this dissertation, the New Testament is selected as the source for religious (in this case, Christian) principles. Other studies could be made using some of the other possibilities for sources discussed above. In order to attempt to be both comprehensive and compact, the New Testament appears to be a proper choice. In fact, it would be possible to choose a subset of this source, a much smaller subset. However, as an initial venture into an uncertain area, it seems best not to restrict ourselves any further.

How should we approach the field of geography for the study? How should we define it in order to fulfill the purposes of the study? Let us consider the structure of the field of geography. Frequently the field is subdivided into physical and human geography. In the former subfield are such disciplines as geomorphology, biogeography, and climatology. In the latter subfield are such disciplines as economic geography, urban geography, and cultural geography (defined here as being narrower than, and thus not equivalent to, human geography). In addition, the subfield of regional geography cuts across the first two subfields and may be considered as a unifying or central subfield. Here one studies the disciplines of geography as they apply

to particular regions, such as Latin America, Europe or East Asia. Two other subfields might be the history of geography and geographical techniques -- with the latter including cartography, remote sensing, and field methods. Geography may be considered as a boundary field between the natural sciences and the social sciences. In that context, some of its disciplines are related to other fields or disciplines outside of geography. For instance, climatology relates to meteorology, geomorphology to geology, and economic geography to economics (deBlij and Muller 1994:40-42).

Given this general structure of the field of geography, how are we to present it so as to be both comprehensive and compact in correspondence with our delimitation of the field of religion? We might choose one or two representative disciplines from each subfield and blend them into a representative definition of geography. Arguably we might consider only the first two subfields, physical and human geography, as comprising the whole field and make our selections only from them. Still the choices for representative topics seem either too many, too few or too confusing.

In reviewing our pattern of selection for the source from the field of religion for our study, we seem to have reduced our choice to a foundational or basic source, from which the rest of the field springs. Perhaps we could do something like that with geography. From physical geography

we could consider temperature, precipitation, and wind from climatology. And from geomorphology we could gather a cluster including mountains, rocks, and the sea. These would be the abiotic features of geography. But geography also includes living forms; so we might add trees, flowers, mammals, and birds. And then finally, of special concern, we could include human beings. Still such a collection would seem awkward and lacking in coherence.

We might seek to be even more fundamental or elemental in choosing geographical content for the analysis required in the study. By analogy with chemistry one might search for something corresponding to the periodic table of the elements which would be suitable for the questions we are asking and the answers we are seeking. We remember that geography is concerned with both the nonliving and the living, both the nonhuman and the human. With reference to ancient Greek philosophical categories, we might select the four elements of air, water, land, and fire from physical geography to address the abiotic factor. The first three correspond to the three forms of matter and the fourth to energy. Then to address the nonhuman biotic factor, we might select the categories of plants and animals largely from the discipline of biogeography in physical geography. To these six fundamental nonhuman components of geography, we would add the human being as the special though not the sole contribution of human geography; for human beings also

interact with the first six elements. The category of land is especially notable since the Greek word for land or earth appears in the name of the field itself. Taking this elemental approach would permit us to more closely resonate with the non-technical geographical language of the New Testament. By selecting these seven elements of geography for analysis, we would also be able to include the higher geographical categories, which may be regarded as composites of the elements.

While the selection of the seven elements would seem to lend simplicity, comprehensiveness, and coherence to the study, this approach is still inadequate because it does not specify what is distinctively geographical. It does not clearly distinguish geography from other fields -- such as biology, geology or literature. To use the elemental approach might lead us into both errors of commission (including non-geographical texts) and errors of omission (excluding geographical texts). Instead it seems better to choose one general term for each of the two major subfields of physical and human geography. For physical geography, we are selecting nature or the land (in a broad sense). Nature refers to the material world, especially as it is unaffected by humans, and includes plants, animals, and geographical features. Land, as used here, means not only the soil but also other natural phenomena associated with the land, and is intended to encompass the subfield of physical geography

with its disciplines. For human geography, we are selecting human occupancy of the land as described in physical geography. We are concerned here with urban and settlement geography -- e.g., cities (distributions and connections), housing patterns, and domestic life. We are also concerned with economic geography -- e.g., economic activities such as fishing, agriculture or commerce. Rather than the simpler geographical elements then, we are considering the more complex geographical features. In particular, we wish to describe those geographical features found in the text -- recognizing that we may not find all possible features there.

This discussion of the sources of geography for the dissertation as related to the structure of the field leads to the question of its nature or definition, a question not peculiar to geography. While nebulosity is not a virtue, it seems that the confusion results partly from a conception of geography that is too narrow. In the concluding chapter this matter is considered in more detail.

In summary we wish to relate the fields of religion and geography through the vehicles of the New Testament and the geographical concepts of land and human occupancy. Through these means we wish to achieve the descriptive and evaluative ends of the study as indicated in the initial paragraph of purpose. The study is intended to be

objective, relating the geographical content of the New Testament.

### **Methodology**

In the preceding paragraphs, we have attempted to define and outline the purpose of the study. We have also attempted to justify the form of the topic and to fit it into a larger context of academic interactions. Now we wish to consider an appropriate methodology for achieving the purpose.

While some New Testament passages have geographical settings, others do not. Thus in attempting to investigate geography in the New Testament, we wish to focus on those relevant passages and to consider them in geographical context.

What method should we use to select the geographical passages? One approach would be to use a concordance to find all the passages which contain various geographical terms. Although we would collect many passages, we would probably omit some because our list of terms was too limited. We would also probably include some non-geographical references and cite the same passages several times if those passages included several terms. In the synoptic gospels this replication would be further intensified due to parallel passages. Because the New Testament is a relatively small document and because the author is familiar with it, it seemed less cumbersome, less



faulty, less impersonal, and less mechanical although somewhat tedious to work through the entire document -- carefully collecting and then classifying (under appropriate categories) the relevant passages. Someone might wish to use a concordance for a more quantitative study of the geography in the New Testament. This study, however, is essentially qualitative -- being concerned with living experience and with perspectives or attitudes grounded in that experience.

There are probably too many passages for us to consider them all in detail. Some passages are only incidentally geographical. Thus it is desirable to be selective in detailed coverage and yet to consider as many representative passages as possible in order to be comprehensive. We wish to avoid excessive repetition; but if there is a large number of similar passages, it may be appropriate to look at several passages in order to reinforce frequently occurring ideas. Other less informative passages may be treated more briefly.

One possible approach would be to work through the entire New Testament for each major term (land and occupancy) separately. This approach would appear to give structure and organization to the study. Yet to do so would fragment the essence of the project, which is about geography as a whole primarily and only secondarily about the composition of geography as reflected in the terms. In

addition, some passages refer to both terms; thus we would cycle through the same passages twice. Should we then look at both terms together in sequentially traversing the entire religious corpus? This option seems better than the first one; it would preserve the unity of both fields, geography and religion.

Since the New Testament subdivides into a few literary forms, it appears that we may wish to adopt or adapt that formal fact in building the structure of the study. While several combinations present themselves, the following structure has promise both for variety and for rhythmic flow and climax. It is proposed that we consider the New Testament in five classes: synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke), the Johannine literature exclusive of Revelation (gospel of John, epistles of John), Acts, the Pauline and non-Johannine epistles, and Revelation. The classes generally follow the literary forms, of which there are four -- gospel, history, letter, and apocalypse (Kümmel 1975:37, 164-65, 248-49, 453).

We are grouping the gospel and epistles of John together because of common traditional authorship and style. Other combinations are possible; one need not follow literary genre strictly. It is appropriate to consider the three synoptic gospels together (rather than combining Luke and Acts based on authorship, for example) since parallel passages regularly occur in two or all three gospels.

Similarly, some of the Pauline epistles have recurrent themes, so that grouping that large collection of works together gives some structure to that segment of our primary document. We then would work through the selected passages in each class for both terms -- the land and its occupancy.

Our methodology in general follows a modified form of the pattern outlined by Richard Hartshorne in his carefully constructed work on the nature of geography, which pattern appears in the context of his discussion of the relative merits of the idiographic (describing individual cases) and nomothetic (formulating scientific laws) approaches (Hartshorne 1959:171). He begins with observation or sensory description; for us, the description of our text is analogous. The next step is analysis or the relation to each other of the parts described previously for each unit, which step we adopt. Then he states a hypothesis of relationships based on the observations of the elements and processes. For us, this step involves comparisons of details found in different units. Finally, if his hypothesis is sound, he reaches a higher level of knowledge in cognitive description. In our work, if we find common features among units, we propose a higher level of knowledge in a more general synthesis.

The dissertation refers to the Greek text of the New Testament and considers variant readings where appropriate. Textual translations range from literal through dynamic

equivalent to free. The King James Version (KJV) is quite literal, for example. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) is also literal but less so than the KJV. The New International Version (NIV) is an example of dynamic equivalence (Fee and Stuart 1993:34-37).

Normally, the dissertation uses one of these three translations. For determining a proper translation, the author regularly consults the Greek text.

The books of the New Testament are written in Greek; although none of the original autographs exists, extensive manuscript evidence does exist. The New Testament itself testifies already to the scriptural quality of some of its parts (1 Timothy 5:18; 2 Peter 3:15-16). Although the divine authority of the books may be recognized by individuals, uncertainties about the exact bounds of the canon continued long after the time of composition. Even today some would prefer some parts of the canon over others (Kümmel 1975:475-510).

One significant distinction in the treatment of the passages is that between a literal or physical reference to a geographical feature and a figurative or symbolic reference. In a literal reference, words are used with a primary or strict meaning in an unimaginative manner. In a symbolic reference, words are used with a secondary or associated meaning, represent something else, and suggest a comparison. The material may represent the immaterial, for

example. The distinction between denotative and connotative meanings may be similar.

Not evenly distributed among the books are the literal and symbolic references. The literal type predominates in Acts, for example, while symbolism is more evident in the gospel of John and in Revelation. Our initial concern is with the literal type of reference since this is what geography deals with in its basics. But because we are concerned in geography about human interactions with the physical elements, the mental transformation of those elements into symbolic form is also important. In addition, to assess geography from a religious or New Testament point of view, an appreciation of symbolic meanings is inherent. We take an objective, text-centered approach rather than a subjective, reader-centered one -- both in general and concerning the literal-symbolic spectrum. That is, we primarily wish to determine the meaning of the text in a given passage.

To give order to the dissertation itself as distinct from the order in the subject matter, regular introductory and concluding sections are included. Each chapter in the body begins with an introduction and ends with conclusion. Additionally, periodic summaries or conclusions of appropriate length are given. Undue repetition is to be avoided, but carefully constructed summaries and conclusions do not waste space when they increase understanding. The

reader may review the material by turning to the summaries. The summaries and conclusions may add connections with preceding material. Part of the final chapter is a natural conclusion already prepared for in part by previous intermediate conclusions.

The treatment of the New Testament for the primary dual descriptive part of the study occupies the major part of each chapter of the main body. The secondary evaluative part of the study has two parts. The first part concerns the attitudes of the text toward the land and its occupancy. Comments on these attitudes are to be found in the conclusions at the ends of each chapter of the body with a summary in the last chapter, in which we enumerate the attitudes or perspectives attained through inductive research in the previous chapters. The second part concerns implications for the study and the practice of geography. We include here the relations between a Christian world view and basic questions about the nature of geography and the setting of priorities in geographical research. Discussion of these implications is to be found in the final concluding chapter.

### **Literature Review**

To relate the fields of geography and religion while being primarily a geographical task is the concern of this dissertation. Thus it is appropriate to review the literature in the region of overlap between geography and

religion. Because this work in attempting to be dissertationally original is paradoxically unconventional (not bound strictly by precedent or generally accepted style), the literature review may also be somewhat different from standard reviews -- in order to establish credibility or legitimacy for the project. The format of the review is as follows. After a central distinction between geography of religions and religious geography is made, a discussion of major themes within the subfield follows. Then a historical report of interactions between the two fields is given. Although the range of interactions related is broad in order to give sufficient context for the purpose of this work, attention and comment are oriented positively or negatively to the direct relevancy of the various features of the development of the subfield for the dissertation. The next two parts of the review focus more specifically on works potentially more closely related to the dissertation -- the first on geography of religions, the second on religious geography. For although the work is mainly in the second form, elements of the first form are present (both explicitly and implicitly) as a basis for understanding the express religious geography (that is, the attitudes) found in the text. A final section of the review covers environmental issues relating to the implications of the study for the field of geography.

## The Geography of Religions and Religious Geography

To define the subfield of the geography of religion is difficult due to the diverse strands composing it (Sopher 1981). According to Sopher both the nature and the existence of the field are uncertain. However, two main approaches may be identified. The first is the geography of religions, which sees religion as a human institution and explores its connections with various human and physical features (Stump 1986). It is more objective and external, not concerned with the inner doctrine and experience of religion but rather with its social, cultural, and environmental associations -- both from religion to geography and the reverse. The second approach, religious geography, is more subjective and internal and attends to the role of religion in molding human perceptions of the world and of the human place in that world. It is the picture of geography or the world in the mind of religious humans, the view of faith (Sopher 1981). It may be classified under geosophy, the study of religious knowledge (Kong 1990). An understanding of the distinction between the two approaches is important for the dissertation, in order properly to classify it and to direct its progress.

Although most recent work has taken the first approach, the second one is of fundamental importance. This would be especially true before the contemporary age of rational science but is still the case today. Whether or not the



geographer should be aware of the inner workings of religion has been debated. Isaac felt that the focus should be the impact of religion on the landscape -- to separate the religious element from the cultural, social complex in assessing its impact in terrestrial transformation (Isaac 1962; Park 1994). The question occurs also for other subfields in the inherently interdisciplinary field of geography -- such as economic or political geography. Some believe that geographers must go beyond effects and get closer to the heart of the issues through the study of religion itself (Kong 1990). Unless they have some training in branches of religious studies, geographers are unable to provide worthwhile insights. Buttner believes that geographers should focus on the geographical but also have subsidiary knowledge of the religious (Buttner 1980). Both the geographer and the student of religion benefit by learning details about the field of the other. This question is pertinent to the dissertation, which by its nature accepts the value of religious knowledge for the geographical investigator (Hemer 1986).

Others support a separation between the geography of religion and the history of religions (as the study of the content of religion may be partially designated). Geographers should concentrate on the extent to which religion provides the forces shaping the environment; they may be unable to speak clearly for either field if they are

caught between the two (Sopher 1981). Levine calls for an intermediate approach. He supports a general knowledge of religion and of some particulars about individual religions and an appreciation of the psychological impact of religion; yet he sees the main focus of the geography of religion to be on the social institutional form of religion rather than on individual religious experience (Levine 1986). Sopher acknowledges that some geographers may be able with discipline to explore deeply the thought of religious systems and to make effective contributions to the subfield. Yet he is also concerned that the overlap of the two fields may be so large that interdisciplinary geographers would be duplicating the work of religious scholars. Geographers do better perhaps by focusing on geography -- considering landscape, ecology, and spatial interactions (Sopher 1981). Kong feels that to limit the questions which geographers may ask is to eliminate exploration of such themes as symbolism, value, and meaning - especially pertinent in the religious aspect of life (Kong 1990; Maier 1975). The discussion on this point is significant for geographers who are attempting to relate the two fields, as is being done in this dissertation -- to determine the proper territory and boundaries for the geography of religion.

#### Religion and Geography

A distinction may also be drawn between "the geography of religion" and "geography and religion." Park prefers the

latter, a more inclusive term, because matters of spatial patterns of religions represent only part of the subfield (Park 1994). The interaction between the two fields may be seen in many ways: religion affects human thought and actions -- bringing about variations in spatial patterns and distributions, of central concern to geography. Both in ancient and in modern times, religion and geography have met intellectually. In seeking to understand God, we consider humanity and the earth; in seeking to understand our earthly environment, we are led to ponder questions of creation and purpose (Glacken 1967). The study of geography and religion is on the periphery of contemporary academic geography; yet to ignore the religious influence is to ignore some significant motivations for human transformation of the landscape.

#### Themes of Interaction between Geography and Religion

Several themes connecting geography and religion are identified in this section (Park 1994). Most of them are directly pertinent for the world of the New Testament examined in this dissertation.

The first theme is the spatial pattern or geographical distribution of religions. In general, various religions are or have been dominant in various areas. Today in some countries religious pluralism has become important. Even within the major religions, there may be significant variations among sects and denominations. The Judaism of

the New Testament period was also not monolithic. Some of the intra-Judaic differences are important for understanding some of the accounts in the gospels (Hanson and Oakman 1998). The religious spatial spread significantly affected the pattern of progress in Paul's peregrinations portrayed in Acts (Wilson 1997).

A second theme is the religious imprint on the landscape through types of architecture, including places of worship and cemeteries. In the New Testament this feature is represented by synagogues and, less noticeably, by house churches. The variety of ecclesiastical edifices or religiously related structures testifies to the diversity which has arisen from the early Christian communities for significance for this work (C. Lai 1974; Weightman 1993; Simpson-Housley 1978). The designation of sacred places and sacred space reflects environmental influences in religious evolution; in the Bible one may note Mount Sinai and the temple. The phenomenon of light symbolically enhances sacred landscapes (Weightman 1996; Corsini 1983).

A third theme is the religious impact on lifestyle and commerce. Included are codes of dress and personal habits; Jewish dress features play a role in the New Testament. Concerning commerce one may note banking regulations or loans on interest. Business at the temple was an occasion for Jesus to take vigorous action. Religion can also affect type of employment or attitudes toward certain occupations

(e.g., tax collectors). Pilgrimages are important in religious experience and also in the economy of destination sites (Beare 1981; Rinschede 1986; Johnsson 1978).

A fourth theme is religious prohibitions on food, plant and animal. Especially pertinent for this study is the Old Testament rejection of swine flesh. In the New Testament the issues of food regulations and ritual washings figure in several passages; one question is whether laws on this matter given to Israel apply to Christians (Taylor 1952). Of significance for appreciating biblical texts and later Christian history is the book by Simoons on food avoidances in the Old World. As mentioned in the apocrypha associated with the Hebrew Bible, faithful Jews were tested on pork consumption in the second century B.C. Christians may also have had a role in proscribing the flesh of horses, camels, and dogs (Simoons (1961). The issue of dietary differences became important in the New Testament when Gentiles came into the church (Bruce 1982). Food preferences are often held strongly. When associated with religious injunctions, they may be difficult to modify. Over time change is possible, however.

Religion and demography is a fifth theme. Included are birth rates and marriage patterns. In the Bible the former are reflected in the genealogies and the latter in selection of marriage partners. A unique example for this topic is

seen in the New Testament in the birth narrative of the messiah (Danker 1988).

The relation between religion and politics constitutes a sixth theme, notably in the conflicts between religious groups. The present example in the Middle East has biblical roots (Baly 1978). New elements today in the situation include the holocaust and Zionism. Place-names may play a symbolic role as expressions of ideological values. For example, one may thus emphasize biblical connections with the land or modern Zionist ideals (Cohen and Kliot 1992). Attitudes of various groups toward the Roman authorities are significant in some New Testament narratives.

Another example of the sixth theme germane to the dissertation is the status of Jerusalem, a city of special religious significance for Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Not only in the New Testament period covered in this work but also before and after, the city has been revered, and competing powers have desired to control it. Among the various roles played by Jerusalem in history are the following. David made it a compromise capital, which was acceptable to the various tribes of Israel. Later it became a royal capital, then a provincial capital under the Persians and the Romans. It also became a noncapital for a while and then a colonial capital under the British mandate after World War I (Emmett 1996). This city has been prominent in both religious and political terms in its

geographically elevated position. Figuring frequently as a setting for the geography discussed in the dissertation, it illustrates one of the means of interaction between the two field under consideration (Cobb 1982; Fitzmyer 1985).

A seventh theme of the connections between geography and religion is religion and culture. Religion is a major determinant of culture, setting community standards, especially in technologically less advanced societies. Not only for believers but also for non-believers in a culture region, religion may be a regulating force -- e.g., a ban on the consumption of alcohol. In the early New Testament communities, culture and religion were closely linked; believers were together in Jerusalem, for example, for more than a few hours one day a week (Sauer 1963; Conzelmann 1987).

An eighth theme is religion and environmental attitudes. Of special significance for this work is this theme. Firstly, for some, cultural or human ecology is central to geography (Barrows 1923). Secondly, environmental issues are a major area for which the implications of this study for the study and the practice of geography apply. The material on this geographical-religious topic appears later in the review.

This section of the review has highlighted a number of noteworthy themes or concerns for geography and religion.

It has also been shown that most if not all of them may be found in the locus of study for the dissertation.

#### Historical Development of the Geography of Religion

This section of the review traces the development of the associations between geography and religion from classical times into the twentieth century. Attention is given explicitly or implicitly throughout to relevance of this development for the dissertation. Because the two approaches of geography of religions and religious geography are sometimes found together and are difficult to separate, this historical survey treats them conjunctively. In discussions following this section, a direct attempt at distinction is made. The coverage here is broader than for later sections of the review; thus some of the strands of process may do more to provide context rather than content for proximate purposes.

Numerous have been the connections between geography and religion in Western history. In their concerns with cosmology, maps, and diagrams, Greek geographers reflected a world view shaped by religion or religious geography (Kong 1990). For Anaximander the world manifested a religious principle of spatial order; his attempts to show mathematical structure in the universe are a consequence of this religious orientation in his scientific investigations. This example is in the religious geography category; his



religion or philosophy directed his geographical pursuits (Gay 1971).

The writings of early Muslim geographers show the interest of Islam in geography. Guided by religious views, these geographical works resulted from extensive Muslim trade, travel, and exploration. An example is one of the first regional geography texts -- giving physical and human geography of Muslim lands. Early Celtic monastic schools in Ireland also produced early geographical material, providing what they knew of the geography of the world.

Although few details are known about geography and religion for the period between 1000 and 1500, apparently geography was influenced by magical and astrological ideas (Sack 1976). During the period of the scientific revolution of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, geography challenged more dogmatic ideas by emphasizing experience in discovery (Livingstone 1990). Yet during the Tudor and Stuart monarchies in Britain, much English scholarship was under theological influence. At Lutheran universities with the advent of the Reformation, geography began to be pursued less in the Greek philosophical spirit and more in the Christian theological spirit (Buttner 1974).

A major development during this period was the production of theologically oriented Christian geographies. Books of geography described the earth and its inhabitants as the work of God, part of the divine creation and thus

reflecting the mind of the creator. Of the many interactions between the two fields, this one with its creation theme is especially pertinent for this dissertation because of connections with environmental issues. Ecclesiastical geography in the period was mission-oriented and mapped the worldwide advances of Christianity. Philipp Melanchthon, friend of Luther and Protestant reformer, founded the school and university system of Lutheran Europe. Any subject taught needed to reflect the interests of reformed doctrine (Buttner 1980).

Although much of the important geographical work came from Germany, Britain also contributed. Geography was seen to be compatible with divinity; theology was important as a context for geography. The German Gottlieb Kasche may have been the first to use the term "geography of religion" in 1795. He saw that subfield as able to demonstrate the comparative advantages of Christianity among the religions (Livingstone 1984; Park 1994).

Another important development in this period of two centuries was the study of other religions. Work describing the influences of non-Christian religions began to appear, so that geography seemed to attain to a more neutral position. Yet the motivation for this diversification Christian interests still provided; the aim was to specify how the religions encountered by Christian missionaries were distributed in the world and how missions were faring in

their surroundings. Whatever the impetus though, the result was systematically broadening, a step toward later concern with the spatial layout of religions (Buttner 1974; Buttner 1980).

The period under consideration may be considered as the golden age of studies in geography and religion, a formative period with roots for much subsequent expansion. A third main feature in the period was the interest in biblical geography, the historical geography of the biblical period. It attempted to identify the locations of sites named in the Bible. In some cases the accuracy of maps in Bible may have been affected by the religious views of the designers. Apparently geographical realism in these maps increased in the light of factual evidence (Kong 1990; Buttner 1980). Early mapmakers relied primarily on biblical texts rather than on personal knowledge of the land in locating places. Some cartographic errors resulted from uncertainties in translations or in the text itself. From the text it is not always clear whether or not a word or a phrase is a place-name. One place may have more than one name; the same name may refer to more than one place (Brodsky 1992). Biblical geography continued to be important after this period and is treated more fully in a later section of the review.

The material covered thus far in the historical review is often not directly pertinent for the dissertation, although it is not for that reason inappropriate for

inclusion -- since it is important to provide grounding for the nature of the project undertaken. In two ways, however, the evidence related is germane. Firstly, the geography and maps being produced in early form are steps for the later production of geographies which make more understandable the text of the New Testament. Secondly, the ideas expressed for how religion may affect geographical understanding are useful in formulating one's own ideas on the matter.

A fourth development was natural theology, in which nature provides evidence for the nature of God. It emerged in the later seventeenth century and continued through the eighteenth and into the nineteenth century. The natural order reflected the wisdom of the designer and creator. The orderly arrangements of lifeforms, landforms, climates, and bodies of water testified to divine oversight (Kong 1990; Glacken 1967). The concept of the hydrological cycle assisted in explaining patterns of land and water in rational terms (Tuan 1968).

The period of the Enlightenment brought a new intellectual environment, in which reason was often asserted over faith and passion. Yet some themes carried over from the golden age into the nineteenth century. For example, some American textbooks in geography portrayed Christianity as the preferred religion (Vining 1982). The place of human beings in the natural order was reappraised with the rise of the Darwinian outlook, which saw geographical features as

products of scientific laws rather than of divine design. The theories of Lamarck became influential while the influence of natural theology diminished (Stoddart 1966; Livingstone 1984).

A trend of environmental determinism developed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with roots in Montesquieu and Voltaire. The features of religions, it was thought, could be explained from consideration of their natural environments. This section of the fabric of the geography of religion continued into the twentieth century. Notions of hell, cold or hot, were related to appropriate climates (Semple 1911). Types of gods were said to be caused by local needs -- a rain god in India, for example (Huntington 1945). Such trajectories as the ones just discussed again do not seem to have explicit pertinence for the dissertation. Yet by considering such intellectual movements, the mind may be exercised to examine the religious beliefs and practices flowing in the New Testament with regard to their origins and effects.

A significant change challenging environmental determinism was the work of Max Weber, which reversed the causal direction and sought the influence of religion on social and economic structures. This perspective was adopted more strongly by geographers after World War II. Apparently the pattern of thesis followed by antithesis then proceeded to the stage of synthesis, with some geographers

coming to see the relations between environment and religion as dialectical (Levine 1986; Buttner 1974). Fickeler accepted the position of bi-directional influence; he suggested that the science of religion should investigate how environment (including people and landscape) affects a religious form and that the geography of religions should investigate the reverse effect. He also identified various themes as proper for study in the geography of religions. They included ceremonialism and the sacred, cult symbolism, sacred colors, ceremonial sounds, numbers, and sacred plants and animals (Fickeler 1962).

In addition to the concept of reciprocity in the causal network, another development is the thought that not from religion itself but rather through the religious group or community do forces molding the landscape emanate. Concerning another matter Buttner responded to the worldwide phenomenon of secularization by suggesting that the geography of religion may develop toward a geography of spiritual attitudes (Buttner 1980).

While the German school of the geography of religion was thus innovative, the French school was more traditional and descriptive. The most influential adherent was Deffontaines, the contents of whose book (Deffontaines 1948) in five parts included the following topics: human residence, demography, agriculture, industry, pilgrimage, transportation, food, and work. Leading American

geographers of religion included Zelinsky, Sopher, Shortridge, and Stump. British contributions to the subfield have been relatively few. Much of the work in the geography of religion in the last century appears to be less related to the purpose of the dissertation to the degree that it is concerned with modern manifestations of religion, Christian or non-Christian, rather than with the biblical period.

#### Place within Geography

Because culture and religion are closely associated, most geographers of religion place the geography of religion within cultural geography. Cultural geography is meant in the restricted sense -- not the looser sense, in which it is equivalent to human geography. Both religion and language may belong to cultural geography since they are foundational for the structuring of society (Park 1994). However, one might say the same for economics and political science if cultural geography is understood with the wider meaning. Levine places geography of religion within cultural geography yet notes that its theoretical foundations have not been debated (Levine 1986). One need not conclude that geography of religion is inherently a marginal incidental part of cultural geography. A major textbook on human geography devotes full chapters to both language and religion (Jordan, Domosh, and Rowntree 1994).

Roger Stump provides another insight on the nature of the subfield. Because religion is influential in a variety of social, individual, and regional contexts, geographers have used a variety of approaches and themes in investigating its impact. That is, the diffuse, loosely defined nature of the geography of religion is perhaps a strength as well as a weakness. He suggests that it is not a distinct, synthetic subfield of study. Rather it is a motif coursing through the larger category of cultural geography (Stump 1986; P. Lai 1999). If geography matures sufficiently, the geography of religion may fade away as a separate subfield since religion in the broad sense could be a central object permeating much of geography (Sopher 1981).

In keeping with the place of implications in this dissertation, geographers of religion may be included with other geographers as ones who have a social responsibility as well as a measure of academic independence -- regardless of the locus within geography. Geographers may assist the clarification of identity and behavior for humanity through teaching, research and policy analysis (White 1985). Geography should reclaim the high ground and not expend its resources wastefully (Stoddart 1987). Morrill has argued that geographers have responsibilities among others to society and humanity (Morrill 1984). These issues of niche and responsibility are important ones for a comprehensive understanding of the subfield under consideration in its



historical development, although they are not of central concern for the dissertation.

Consistent with the problems of definition and structural position for the geography of religion, the subfield has operated with more than one paradigm in human geography -- a strength in terms of freedom of exploration, a weakness in terms of lack of cohesion. One of the paradigms has been humanism; humanistic geography may be seen as a form of criticism based on non-empirical methods, which emphasizes human aspects of culture -- meaning, value, purpose. One of its prominent proponents, David Ley, finds humanistic geography to be not a separate systematic branch of geography but rather a perspective, empirical and emphasizing "the human construction and experience of place." Geographic facts are the result of both deterministic and free forces. In the social world of life, values reside in social contexts and are expressed symbolically. Religion may fit naturally into such a complex (Park 1994).

Ley cites Burton, who connects the quantitative revolution with a regression toward environmental determinism. In contrast to positivism, more empirical methods view theoretical models as heuristic -- providing insights rather than absolute truths. Ley questions the "elevated status" given to theory -- not commending "naive

empiricism" but warning of "naive theoreticism." Theory may be supporting "practical interests" (Ley 1982).

Buttimer proposes a phenomenological approach, in which the world is permitted to reveal itself in its own terms (Buttimer 1976). There is a world for each individual; one may engage in and also transcend one's environment. For the geographer of religion, one may perceive that values and beliefs influence actions. A geography explicitly attending to links between personal and social attitudes may be effective in placing religion in environmental context. Social decisions are often based on partial knowledge; causal connections are not always clear (Gale 1977). In Christian perspective, a humanistic geography would consider such aspects of human existence as material and social relationships (the horizontal dimension), and accountability to the creator (the vertical dimension).

Gregory describes models of historical change in a critique of humanistic geography. At least one of the models, dialectical reproduction, in which "society transforms the individuals who create society," provides a framework potentially applicable for students of geography and religion. The structuration model for social systems and practices may also be useful. The connections of science with political structure should be considered in assessing causes of environmental degradation. The procedures of a recognizably scientific method are

essentially subjective. Both science as socially constructed and society in its structure may be "shown to depend on a prior materialism." By perceiving "the material grounding of practical life," one may more fully understand the methods of production (Gregory 1981).

Levine believes that geographers of religion would benefit from a historical materialist approach, which would apply to religious studies in a class society. One might consider how social transformations might affect religious groups. Such a research method would look beyond religion as a motivator and would search for underlying causes of religious phenomena (Levine 1986).

Another approach with possible application for the geography of religion is postmodernism. It is a revolt against convention, the rationality of modernism, and the search for universal truth and meaning. Texts are open to various interpretations, themselves conditional. Knowledge is relative; reality cannot be ordered in absolute terms (Dear 1988; Cosgrove 1990). Such a methodology may be suitable for studying religion in society, when personal interpretation and traditional wisdom conflict.

This discussion of the place of the geography of religion within geography and possible methods of study concludes the historical review of the subfield in context. Although considerations of methodology stand apart from more concrete geographical manifestations found in the New

Testament, this way of thinking is helpful in assessing implications of its texts for the field of geography. Yet Abler warns against excessive concerns with methodology and philosophy. He prefers substantive research and effective solutions to problems closer to the core of geography (Abler 1987).

### Geography of the Bible

The next part of the review is part of the historical development of the subfield under the more objective approach described earlier as the geography of religions. It is especially pertinent to the dissertation and is treated separately here -- viz., biblical geography, with roots in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as covered earlier. Although the dissertation is not primarily concerned with the formal geography (physical or human) of Palestine or adjacent areas, some of that material is included in the appendices. A knowledge of that geography is also helpful as background for appreciating the New Testament geographical texts. This geography is more concrete, more like conventional geography. It is more relevant to the descriptive part of the study, less so to the evaluative part. Following then is discussion of some of the major works of the geography of the Bible, part of the subfield of the geography of religion.

An early example of biblical or scriptural geography is the Onomastikon of Eusebius from the fourth century. This

type of geography continued through the medieval period and beyond, often including maps of Palestine. The importance of biblical authority in the Reformation stimulated interest in biblical content, including geography. Not only Protestants but also Catholics showed enthusiasm for scriptural geography; most of the geographies of this type from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries reflected a late medieval understanding of geography and history and were in tension with newer scientific approaches. One example, concerned with genealogies of Canaanites and Phoenicians, was by the Frenchman Samuel Bochart from 1646. Edward Wells published the historical geography of the Old and New Testaments (1708-1712) in four volumes. Since he had not visited Palestine, Wells used the contents of the Bible and many secondary sources (Butlin 1993).

The work of Edward Robinson opened the way to new geographical discoveries in Palestine. He visited the land in 1838 and published the results of his research in 1841 in both English and German (Robinson 1841). The German edition was dedicated to Carl Ritter, whom Robinson considered as his teacher and mentor. He was assisted by Eli Smith; both kept diaries, which were the basis for the published work -- a landmark in Palestinian exploration in the nineteenth century. His guiding principle for the study of Palestine was the importance of the relations between geography and history. The work has errors, some stemming from a

deficiency in archaeological knowledge; yet he made several discoveries. He is considered the most important explorer of Palestine in the century (Ben-Arieh 1983).

Carl Ritter published a comparative geography in four volumes (Ritter 1866). He employs a scientific approach and uses much previously published literature -- the Bible, Josephus, Philo, the Talmud, medieval Christian writings, works of Arab geographers, and travel accounts. Each region is treated systematically -- biblical synopsis, historical reconstruction, and details on human settlements, transportation routes, and agricultural produce. He covers places of habitation more fully than geological, climatic or biological phenomena. He compares sources and includes a bibliography of both the literature and the maps of Palestine. Yet he never visited Palestine. His writings and the map of C. van de Velde together may be considered the most significant achievement of fifty years of exploration and research in the geography of Palestine (Ben-Arieh 1983).

Ritter believes that physical conditions are important in determining the history of Palestine and history in general. To give understanding of "the individuality of each land," its particular features, and their influence on humans is "what gives the science of geography its dignity and worth." He emphasizes the geographical setting of Palestine -- isolated yet bridging. Its situation with

relation to "three great continents and five bodies of water" made it suitable as a center for transmitting the gospel of the messiah throughout the world (Ritter 1866).

A British clergyman, A.P. Stanley visited Palestine in 1852 and 1862 and wrote his book in 1864 (Stanley 1864). His preface, "The Connection of Sacred History and Sacred Geography," indicates that he sees links between the chosen people and the promised land. "Geographical facts...we cannot wrest...to meet our views" nor "refuse the conclusions they force upon us." He refers to "the constant agreement between the recorded history and the natural geography both of the Old and New Testament." Stanley suggests two possible answers for the desolation and deterioration of Palestine compared to biblical times -- (1) deforestation and soil erosion and (2) changes in the composition and culture of the population (Ben-Arieh 1983).

There were many publications on Palestine by Western writers in the nineteenth century. In addition to research works, the number includes letters, memoirs, itineraries, and reports by missionaries, physicians, and others. The Palestine Exploration Fund Survey of the 1870s was an elaborate scientific study by European explorers. The literature of the period neglected for the most part contemporary human geography. It was interested in specific historical periods, both biblical and others. Comparisons were made and explanations were sought for "similarities and

differences between regions and periods." Although physical determinism was prominent, these works began also to consider the importance of culture and society (Ben-Arieh 1989).

A major figure, building partly on those preceding him, was George Adam Smith, whose historical geography was first published in 1894, with a twenty-fifth edition in 1931 (Smith 1931). Of special concern for students of the Bible is "to discern between what physical nature contributed to the religious development of Israel, and what was the product of moral and spiritual forces." For the writing of such a work as his, Smith cites three conditions -- "personal acquaintance with the land," study of previous explorations, and use of the findings of biblical criticism. The three parts of the work discuss the land as a whole, western Palestine, and eastern Palestine. Geography is essential for understanding history in its political, economic, and military dimensions. Not only a geographical work, it also has a compelling literary style. Smith describes the land as "both near to, and aloof from the main streams of human life...a sanctuary and an observatory." Yet geography does not give all the answers to historical and religious development. Rather geography is often "only the stage on which a spirit...rises superior" to both the "aids" and the "obstacles" from the environment (Butlin 1988).



Others have commented on the theme of the connections between geography and history of religious development in Palestine, especially for the biblical period. Adler, for instance, sees Palestine as characterized by solitude corresponding to natural barriers around it. The isolated inhabitants come to "acquire a certain hardness of character." Frequently the sea is a feature to bring people together through commerce. But in the case of Palestine, the Mediterranean contributes to the separation of the inhabitants from the nations. For along the coast of the country, few natural harbors are found. Similarly, a river is often considered to be a means of communion with the external world. But the Jordan fails to fulfill expectations; instead, rather than flowing outward, it empties into the Dead Sea. Despite the benefits of social interaction, in it may arise "a tendency toward uniformity," restraining "the development of distinct individual effort." A genius or an extraordinary mind finds solitude indispensable for the growth of a separate self." Adler compares the country to the layout of the temple -- from Judah in the center through Samaria to Galilee in the open courtyard (Adler 1875).

Another example of this type of analysis, following on the period of exploration and discovery, is provided by Daly. Palestine as a narrow strip at the eastern end of the Mediterranean lies between the Tigris-Euphrates and Nile

valleys. Armies moving between Asia and Africa have used the Palestinian pathway. Thus Egyptian, Assyrian, Persian, Roman, and other troops have marched through the small country. Daly compares the diversification of the inhabitants, separated by geographical barriers, within the country to that found later in Switzerland. Climate has been important in shaping the moral and religious thought of the residents. Yet the innate qualities of the people must be taken into account as well (Daly 1900).

Kallner and Rosenau touch on themes mentioned by the previous two writers. They find that the land is separate from its surroundings, so as to be nearly insular. Yet the territory, rather than being uniform, may be described as a "geographical mosaic." In an observation relating to the theme of isolation, they note that around the Dead Sea often (especially on the eastern shore) there is not room for even a restricted beach (Kallner and Rosenau 1939).

Known for his environmental determinism, Ellsworth Huntington refers to evidence in Palestine for "the power of nature in molding human actions and thoughts." Yet he also writes that "the correct interpretation of history demands first a knowledge of men's mental, moral, and spiritual qualities." He also argues for the effects of climate on history -- through disasters such as war and famine and also through accommodation of prosperity. Huntington also

believes that climate only indirectly bring modifications in human character (Huntington 1911).

The geographical data and commentary on the land of Israel or Palestine contained in the preceding works are pertinent mainly for understanding the descriptive part of the dissertation. To the extent that the evaluative part (attitudes and implications) builds on the descriptive part, the biblical geography is also pertinent for it -- although less directly. The same remarks apply to the following works, which are representative and more recent researches and compilations in the category of biblical geography.

Y. Aharoni has written a major work in the class of the historical geography of Palestine (Aharoni 1979). The first part describes the general setting, the physical geography, and transportation routes. Another section treats the question of the identity of place-names. Part two moves through the historical periods as far as the time of Persian rule preceding Alexander the Great. These periods include those of the conquest and settlement, the united monarchy, the divided monarchy, and the last days of the southern kingdom. Among the maps are ones for archaeological excavations and the tribal boundaries. In the preface in remarks reminiscent of geographers of the past, Aharoni says that "the geographical position of this little land has always dominated its history." In this land, "geography and

history are so deeply interwoven that neither can be really understood without the help of the other."

Related and yet different is the atlas edited by H.G. May (May 1984), a fine resource with both maps and text. Two sections with photographs and text supplement the map section. One discusses the history of Israel and surrounding nations; the other, archaeology and the Bible. The references to archaeology in both May and Aharoni suggest the importance of this discipline in general and also for the descriptive part of the dissertation; what is significant for the biblical period may not always be visible but rather beneath the surface of the earth. The maps are mainly for various historical periods, with a few on physical geography (natural regions, vegetation, rainfall). Two maps of Jerusalem give details for Old and New Testament times. One map shows Palestine under the Herods; another, Palestine in New Testament times; both are pertinent for this project. The informative and compact text accompanying the maps is well-done. Without the work of many predecessors, such a useful work would scarcely have been possible.

A standard in the field is the geography of Denis Baly (Baly 1974). The first part is more general and discusses geology, climatology, agriculture, transportation routes, and the wilderness. The second part covers the regions of the country on both sides of the Jordan. These include the

plain of Sharon, Galilee, the central valley, the Carmel range, the highlands of Judah, and the heights of Edom. Photographs, maps, and diagrams appear throughout.

#### Religious Geography for the New Testament

In this part of the review, attention is centered on works of geographical relevance for the New Testament texts considered in the dissertation -- which is primarily in the category of religious geography. That is, it is concerned with the perception of the world in the religious mind or, more specifically in the example of this work, with the understanding of geography by the authors and actors or agents in the New Testament. The dissertation is viewing the New Testament as a geographical region or territory. The purpose in this section of the review is to determine how useful the available resources which examine this territory are for the purpose of the dissertation, i.e., for elucidating the New Testament perspectives on geography.

In the first main descriptive chapter, the dissertation discusses the synoptic gospels, looking first at texts for physical geography -- including mountains, climate, and biogeography. The sources which examine these texts closely are usually interested mainly in theological or ethical issues and not as much with geography. Even less so are they concerned with how religion perceives or shapes geography, as this dissertation is. Consequently these sources are sometimes useful in providing input data for

this work; but they rarely process it or provide output as desired. Thus it is the task of this author to follow through concerning process and output. Insights on specific details are sometimes found to stimulate creative analysis, especially in the more exhaustive sources (Davies and Allison 1988, 1991, 1997; Rhoads and Michie 1982; Fitzmyer 1981, 1985; Thompson 1972). For the biogeographical texts, more specialized works are sometimes helpful; but again the contribution is often descriptive data, unprocessed for the needs of this project (Zohary 1982; Moller-Christensen and Jorgensen 1965). Similar remarks apply for the texts in human geography.

The next chapter covers the gospel of John. The rich symbolism present in this book for some geographical texts provides opportunities for biblical sources, general or special, to probe the figurative meanings; comments on the shepherd and vine imagery are potentially useful for the goals of the project. The discussion about mountains also is sometimes of assistance. The theme of the contrast between the above and the below also finds illumination in some sources (Brown 1966, 1970; Bruce 1983; Culpepper 1998; Lindars 1981; Barrett 1978).

In the following chapter on Acts, little symbolism occurs but quite a bit of concrete geography. Some of it is included in the urban historical material in an appendix. Quite a few occupations are also discussed -- including

soldier and silversmith, tanner and tentmaker. In general the sources have some comment about the urban sites, sometimes shaped by a biblical outlook. The incident of Paul's journey and shipwreck provides an example of how geography (specifically, climatology in this case) may be used to attempt to validate the biblical record. An attempt is made to reconstruct weather conditions at the time of the voyage to Rome (Hayward 1982; Wallace and Williams 1998; Krodel 1986).

A number of interesting and colorful passages are found in the chapter on the epistles, especially from the general epistles. A few are notably significant for this study, related to the above/below distinction and the destiny of the world. Biblical sources for these texts are sometimes helpful in assessing the pertinent geography, but usually the comments need to be adapted rather than adopted. Due to the exploratory nature of the project, it is not surprising to find few sources with similar intentions. In some cases though, remarks help clarify relevant ideas (Attridge 1989, Bauckham 1983; Cranfield 1975, 1979; Kelly 1962).

The final (fifth) main descriptive chapter discusses the singular book of Revelation. A number of passages are concerned with natural disasters; a number of others, with symbolic biogeography. Some themes present in the epistles occur in Revelation also. As before, the sources are instructive if read carefully. The world is seen as

temporary and mutable. Whether the geography is literal or figurative is sometimes difficult to determine (Krodel 1989; Ford 1975; Roloff 1993).

### Environmental Issues

A central concern in geography, and consequently also for this dissertation, is the issue of environmental degradation -- or perhaps, more broadly, simply the environmental issue. It is especially pertinent for the dissertation since in recent decades the question of possible Christian responsibility for the ecological (or environmental) crisis has been debated. In this part of the review, some of the significant writings in this matter are discussed -- in some detail in some cases. In the evaluative part (perspectives and implications) of the work (in the last chapter), further discussion of environmentally relevant writings may be found.

The seminal article for the contemporary discussion came from history professor Lynn White in 1967 (White 1967). In general White places much of the blame for environmental problems on Christian influence. He is especially concerned about the impact of western science and technology. Since well before the industrial revolution, the Western world has been the leader in technology. And it is Christian attitudes about the human relation to nature that have brought our science and technology. Sometimes unintentionally changes in human ways affect nature.



Religion is a major conditioning force for ecology; what humans believe affects their actions in the environment. When Christianity triumphed over paganism, a major revolution in ways of thinking occurred. As the world's most anthropocentric religion, Christianity (especially in the West) promoted the idea of divine sanction for human exploitation of nature. While pagan animism showed respect for guardian spirits in nature, Christianity permitted the exploitation of nature through an attitude of indifference for the feelings of or in natural objects. The solution for the environmental crisis is not more science and technology, at least not until we attend to the religious issue. Either we must find a new religion (such as Zen Buddhism) or reconsider our old one, perhaps modeled after Francis of Assisi; instead of humans as unlimited rulers of creation, he advocated the equality of all creatures. White suggests that he be "a patron saint for ecologists."

One early response to White came from Rene' Dubos in 1972 in an article reprinted in a collection in 1990 (Dubos 1990). He says that environmental disasters (erosion, species extinction, excessive resource exploitation) have occurred at all periods and throughout the world, not only in the Christian West. He cites examples from the Neolithic period, Egypt, the Australian aborigines, Greece, Mexico, China, and Japan. The Chinese care for nature, Dubos thinks, probably came as a response to previous damage. The

example of spoliation of the cedars of Lebanon is discussed in the third appendix of this work (Mikesell 1969; Chaney and Basbous 1978). Dubos finds Benedict of Nursia to be a better example for ecology than Francis; for he favored not only protection but also development of nature. The Benedictines have actively intervened in nature but with wisdom. Representing the Cistercians, Bernard also favored human modification of nature for good. Thus the solution to environmental problems for Dubos is not a retreat from either Christian tradition or technology; rather a new definition of progress is required. Since humans change nature by simple presence, they must choose only whether to do so constructively or destructively, not whether to do so at all. He calls for a "creative stewardship of the earth." The points raised by the various contributors to this discussion are significant for the dissertation, as they offer possible thought patterns by which to interpret New Testament statements about environmental attitudes.

Yi-Fu Tuan also finds that environmental destruct is not peculiar to Christian civilization (Tuan 1970). A conflict is often seen between ideal beliefs and actual practice regarding the environment (P. Lai 1999). Classical civilization had already begun to mistreat nature when Christianity came to be. The Romans surpassed the Greeks, with the public roads built and the grid method of land division used with little regard for natural features.

Dominance over nature in Europe came later with administrative and technological changes. The Chinese engaged in deforestation with population increases despite warnings by various officials. Traditional Chinese architecture used much wood. Buddhism has a mixed record of preservation and destruction, the latter partly from the practice of cremation. The Communist government has set a good example of erosion control and reforestation. Tuan's view that conflicting needs and desires make environmentally responsible attitudes difficult to apply is ethically and intellectually insightful, worthy of consideration in this dissertation as New Testament attitudes toward nature are traced and analyzed.

Tuan elaborates further on the ethical and existential dimensions of human life, with application for ecological issues, i.e., with the human ability to deal effectively with those issues (Tuan 1971). In a statement noteworthy for this project, Tuan says that for geographers, nature refers to the content of physical geography, human constructions and environments being excluded. Egocentric, yet needing others to survive and with "no clearly definable essence, " man is "unfinished, plastic." While seeking order, he may simultaneously maintain "contradictory ideas and values." These thoughts about human inconsistency invite comparison with New Testament assessments of the human condition.

Another voice in the discussion is that of John Passmore, who partially agrees and partially disagrees with White (Passmore 1974). Concerning the human relationship to nature, he finds two possible interpretations in the Old Testament. The first attitude, that of a despotic ruler, was long dominant and is sometimes the focus of modern critics; the other attitude is that of a good shepherd. Yet Genesis is not the source of an arrogant human attitude toward nature. For it not only grants humans the right of rulership of the earth but also presents the world as good before humans were created. That world exists not to serve humans but rather to glorify God. It was the Greek influence on Christian theology, he says, that led to the view that humans may exploit nature without moral accountability.

Two minority traditions in Western culture, both of which imply responsibility toward nature, contrast with the view of humans as despots. The first is conservationist and stresses conserving the fertility of the earth through careful management. Though Passmore finds the roots of this idea in the philosopher Iamblichus (third century A.D.), who in turn traced it to a comment by Plato, he believes that it was not held by Christians until Matthew Hale (seventeenth century) and became widespread only in recent years (Attfield 1983). The second tradition sees humans working with nature to bring its potential to perfection. To follow

this attitude would deter humans from "designing towns and buildings out of relationship to their sites." One may hear echoes here of the Chinese principle of feng shui (C. Lai 1974). It is important in the dissertation to be aware of these various views about biblical attitudes toward nature and not to accept too quickly the most superficially appealing one.

Lewis Moncrief notes that non-Christian cultures have also abused the environment (Moncrief 1973). The religious (Judeo-Christian) component of Western culture is at most only indirectly responsible for environmental degradation; other forces also play their roles -- such as democracy, urbanization, and population increase. Science and technology have developed in other non-Western countries without the Judeo-Christian tradition as a precursor. Moncrief cites Jean Mayer in support of the idea that increased wealth is a major source of the problem. "It's the rich who wreck the environment...and create more pollution." A wealthy China would do more damage than a poor China.

William Coleman is another who partly supports and partly opposes White (Coleman 1976). He cites Moncrief as a proper moderating critic of White, with his attention to "economic and social transformations in the West." It is difficult to establish precisely how ethical standards affect human conduct. Coleman finds that some Christians in

the seventeenth century promoted the developing economic individualism. In particular, he cites William Derham as giving the approval of Christianity to both capitalistic enterprise and technology based on science. Christian leaders in England bear some responsibility; yet they were responding to the economic teachings becoming dominant in European society. Attfield believes that Coleman exaggerates both the degree and the influence of Derham's blessing on capitalism (Attfield 1991).

In another article White responds to his critics, some of who claimed that he had misunderstood the nature of human dominion in Genesis 1, that it is stewardship rather than arbitrary rule. Biblical exegesis has not always been consistent; scattered biblical passages supporting equality of all creatures may come to challenge the dominant anthropocentric view, he says. A dualism between humans and nature is a deeply-rooted value. He questions a prudential ethic which offers respect to other creatures because of potential repercussions on humans who perturb the ecosystem. He reiterates his contention that the traditional Judeo-Christian view is that the creation was designed in every respect for human benefit only.

Philosophy professor Robin Attfield reviews the positions of White, Passmore, and Coleman and generally supports evidence for a benign Christian attitude toward nature (Attfield 1983, 1991). He frequently cites C.J.

Glacken with approval and points out that Passmore refers to Glacken in his book with high regard (Glacken 1967). Some of the following remarks derived from Attfield are founded on Glacken's work. The Old Testament does not affirm that all else exists to serve humans. The whole creation God himself finds to be good or very good. Restrictions are placed on the treatment of trees and animals. Humans are to care for the garden of Eden; their dominion over nature includes responsibility to the creator. Favorable attitudes toward the creation are found also in the New Testament and in Christian works from the patristic and medieval periods. Later Calvin, though adhering to anthropocentrism, also speaks for stewardship.

Francis Bacon and Rene Descartes are sometimes criticized for exploitative attitudes toward nature. Bacon favored the investigation of nature for human benefit and was optimistic about technology; yet he was also concerned about the misuse of knowledge and advocated seeking it "for the benefit and use of life." Descartes spoke of his aim for humans to become "the masters and possessors of nature." Yet while he did not favor "the unbridled pursuit of power or gain," according to Attfield, he was not fully aware of the potential dangers of science and technology.

Matthew Hale says that humans were "to preserve the face of the earth in beauty, usefulness, and fruitfulness." John Evelyn of the Royal Society in England warned of the dangers

of deforestation and anticipated G. P. Marsh in some ways concerning human plundering of the environment. John Ray (seventeenth century) said that the creator is pleased with the efforts of humans in adorning the earth with cities, villages, gardens, orchards, woods, and pastures. Christians did not in general exhibit a reckless approach toward nature, says Attfield. He acknowledges the diversity of views on nature among Christians in history. Yet the responsible position "has never been entirely lost to view." It is instructive to follow the record of the views of Christians over the many centuries, views that one may suppose to be based to some extent on an understanding from the Bible. Yet for the purposes of the dissertation, these views are secondary in importance to the direct evidence from the Bible itself and from the New Testament in particular.

Of special note for environmental studies are the works of C. J. Glacken, especially his major composition already cited (Glacken 1967). Although he did not begin work on his Ph.D. until age 40 when he formally identified himself with the field of geography, his previous thought and travels were moving him in that direction. Yet he was not only a geographer but also a historian of ideas, who was concerned with large issues of interaction between humans and nature. In a retrospective autobiographical sketch, he expressed gratitude for an early interest in the Far East and in non-



Western cultures in general. He explored the interdisciplinary spread of ideas and sought a synthesis of interconnections which would bring him closer to reality. Yet he also stressed the concrete, the empirical world of nature and culture, which he experienced in his travels. Theory had limitations; models, pitfalls (Glacken 1983; Hooson 1991).

In a paper at a symposium, Glacken presented some of the ideas later formulated in his magnum opus. He finds that ideas from the Old Testament were influential for modern conceptions of human connections with the earth. Especially significant ancient ideas for ecology were those of design in nature and environmental influence. In the seventeenth century as a rebuttal to contrary ideas, Ray and Derham attempted to show the wisdom of God as manifested in nature. Some of the features that they noted were the following: the axial inclination of the earth, the large percentage of ocean on the surface of the planet, and the distribution of landforms and climates. Humans were "mighty but not omnipotent" in the scale of nature, their task being to improve "the primeval aspect of the earth" (Glacken 1956). In his paper at another symposium, Glacken included additional material on the background of modern ecological thought (Glacken 1963).

His summative and perhaps seminal work, *Traces on the Rhodian Shore*, was published in 1967. Its central theme is

that Western thought through the end of eighteenth century was dominated at various times by one or more of three ideas -- a designed earth, environmental influence on humans or culture, and humans as environmental modifiers or geographic agents. The volume is comprehensive in scope, wide-ranging in citations, and polished yet readable in style. Its enthusiastic reception indicated its significance not only for geography but also for history and anthropology.

Because ecology is a central concern for geography and because Glacken's work is so extensive, that work is pertinent for the dissertation in that it presents many thoughts from many sources about what the relations between humans and the environment have been or could be. Yet because its references to the New Testament are relatively few and do not interact with the total geography of that document, its direct value for both the descriptive and the evaluative parts of the project is limited.

In *Traces* Glacken traces the trajectory of his three themes as threads through the thought of each major historical period that he covers -- ancient, medieval, early modern, and eighteenth century. The chapters most significant for present purposes are those concerning Judeo-Christian theology and the Christian middle ages. He reviews important Old Testament ideas about creation, finding the world and all its components to be continually contingent on the care of the creator. In the New

Testament, Paul points to the creation as a partial source of revelation about the ways and works of God. Humans are in a medial position between God and nature. Although God created, he was not a part of his creation. Humans in God's image are stewards responsible for maintaining and managing his work.

A diverse range of ideas Glacken finds among Christian thinkers in medieval times. Basil wrote of the wisdom of the creator evident in the balance and harmony of nature and in the adaptations of humans to conditions on the earth. In rejecting a utilitarian view of nature, Augustine said that natural creatures should be judged for how they fulfill their divinely derived purposes, not for their usefulness to humans. For Albert the Great, although the earth was no longer a perfect environment for humans after the Fall, yet it remained a fit one. Despite the imperfections of nature, its study brings knowledge valuable both intrinsically and practically.

Aquinas called for a civil ruler to model his efforts on the example of the creator. In making use of what already exists in nature as he establishes his realm, a king should consider a place that is healthful for its inhabitants, secure from enemies, and productive for the necessities of life. In thoughts bearing on the purposes of this study, Roger Bacon found spiritual meanings in geography. From a knowledge of places, one may infer divine intentions. In

the medieval period, human modification of the environment is seen with respect to forest clearance and regeneration, soil improvement, hunting, the garden, and swamp drainage.

Though Glacken had planned a sequel on environmental themes in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and had written part of it, it was never published. A later paper carries the discussion into the nineteenth century with attention to Romantic authors, Marsh, and evolutionary views of the earth (Glacken 1970b). Another paper shows the variety in Western thought concerning human transformation of nature (Glacken 1970a).

Robin Doughty notes that various critics of White find the view of humans as responsible stewards to be more consistent with the Genesis account than his view of humans as overlords (Doughty 1981). More concerned is Doughty with the historical thought of the Reformation, which he examines, giving attention to both favorable and unfavorable understandings of its position on the environment. Christian thought is too complex to permit easy generalization about attitudes toward God, humans, and creation. He finds that "perhaps, Reformation thought...proves most amenable to White's sweeping accusation of ecological intemperance." The approach of theologians (such as Paul Tillich, Richard Niebuhr, and Martin Buber), who have given more than traditional emphasis to an immanent God, would seem more likely to favor a caring

attitude toward the creation. Especially notable is the alternative of the process theology of A.N. Whitehead. In it "God directs from within the processes of nature...he is a persuasive not coercive force." For a theology of the environment, Doughty finds the concept of immanence to be important; "more than an appeal to traditional and historical Christian doctrine" is required.

In responding to Doughty, David Livingstone challenges the idea that the Puritan attitude toward nature was arrogant, despite instances of environmental unconcern (Livingstone 1983). The attitude of humility toward nature by such scientists as Newton and Pascal assisted the development of modern science; nature would be known through observation and not by a priori deduction. Calvin referred to stewardship and "the frugal and moderate use" of the creation. Humans are both separate from and continuous with nature. In Reformation-Puritan thought, both divine transcendence and immanence appears. Since the elements of a proper environmental ethic are part of the heritage from the Reformation, it is unnecessary to seek a solution in a new ethic or religion. For the purposes of the dissertation, these statement by various scholars have comparative value.

Discussion continued about the role of Christianity in ecological decline for many years after White's first article. Robert Ayers suggests that White's thesis is an

oversimplification, since many social and scientific factors may play a role (Ayers 1986). The context of the dominion passage in the Genesis creation account seems to argue against the interpretation of humans as despotic rulers. For example, Genesis 1:29 seems to imply vegetarianism for humans. Additionally, when Adam names the animals, he was establishing their distinct existence in creation, not his own dominion over them. St. Francis' views had both hierarchical and egalitarian aspects, Ayers says, and thus he questions White's understanding on that point. He also find that White's characterization of Latin Christianity as ecologically irresponsible does not apply to Augustine or Aquinas. Both seem to reflect the biblical position of "a dialectical tension between humanity's transcendence of and radical oneness with the rest of creation." The specific examples cited by this author contribute to the understanding of some of the earthier texts in the New Testament and thus are useful input for the dissertation.

Paul Santmire cites Rosemary Ruether, who holds that Christianity adopted a false view of nature from classical civilization and transmitted it but did not originate (Santmire 1985). Christian theology contains two contrasting motifs relevant to environmental concerns. In the spiritual motif, the human spirit rises above nature to attain communion with God; in the ecological motif, it is rooted in the natural world. Jesus' message of the Kingdom

of God was directed toward people, but he also expected a transformation of heaven and earth. The God of Jesus was not only concerned about individual souls but also was the designer of the entire creation. Paul reflected the ecological motif in his expectation of the renewal of creation.

The dissertation considers New Testament texts; yet since the New Testament has roots in the Old Testament, what the latter says about geographical issues may be pertinent. Especially is this true for environmental issues, since many of the basic texts of relevance are found there. Jeanne Kay believes that the Hebrew Bible expresses explicit attitudes about the environment and that biblical and modern scientific environmental systems may differ (Kay 1988, 1989). The Old Testament view is "a belief in nature as a tool of divine justice." God rewards good behavior with a beneficial environment and punishes evil behavior with a detrimental one. Evidence for this view occurs throughout the Old Testament. Not only may humans have dominion over nature but also nature over humans. When God sends enemies against Israel, the devastated sites become inhabited by birds and mammals; thorns and thistles also invade. In a biblical environmentalism, any human transgression (including avarice and oppression of the poor) may have environmental consequences.

Susan Bratton also writes about the Old Testament and ecology (Bratton 1984). The Old Testament theme of creation is related to other themes; she cites Gerhard von Rad's suggestion that creation is the first of God's miraculous acts in history, a later one being the creation or salvation of Israel. Three characteristics of creation in the Old Testament are that it is very good, is blessed by God, and praises him. She significantly notes that the dominion passage is connected with the idea of humans as created in God's image. Not only did he create originally, but he continues to act in or interact with creation. The creator has given humans both a blessing and a responsibility. On another occasion (Bratton 1995) she lists examples of Christians who have shown exemplary environmental attitudes -- including early Celtic monastics, Franciscans, Benedictines, and farmers from Anabaptist backgrounds. In general these groups favor simplicity, value contact with the creation as spiritually beneficial, and believe the creation capable of disclosing aspects of God's character. Bratton feels that Christian ecological concern has been too general; more attention is needed to specific issues--such as acid rain, population expansion, and declining biodiversity.

Emanuel Maier refers to the Old Testament and relates geography and religion in a different way (Maier 1975). A group removed from its territory must find a new territorial



base or lose its identity. The Israelites received the law and then entered the promised land. When the Babylonians and the Romans separated the people from the land, their existence was threatened. But the law (torah), which they took with them, may have served as a movable territory, symbolically substituting for lost real territory.

Noteworthy but less directly pertinent to the dissertation are the ecological traditions of other (non-Christian) cultures or religions (Kinsley 1995). Included are native American, Ainu, Australian aboriginal, Hindu, Buddhist, and Chinese traditions. It is sometimes worthwhile to compare other ideas to those at the center of current scrutiny.

### **Conclusion**

We wish to discuss the most applicable New Testament passages with geographical significance in a specific way and in detail and to make geographically relevant comments about them. Some books we expect to have more pertinent material than others. We seek to capture not only the focused geographical dimension of a passage but also the connections between passages. The two primary terms are expanded at times in order to make more specific remarks. For instance, we comment particularly on a subdivision of nature (such as plants or water) rather than on nature as a whole.

Other approaches to doing this type of study are possible. For the perspectives of another religion for geography, one would consider appropriate religious documents. Connections between each of the two fields with other fields are also possible. For example, a group of essays, edited by S. A. Grunlan and M. Reimer, has been published relating religion (specifically Christianity) and sociology. Although these essays emphasized the applications of sociological research in various social contexts, one could center more on an academic or theoretical approach. Because geography has inherent associations with a number of other fields, interaction studies for that field seem to have a natural base. A physical chemist, Peter W. Atkins, has written a book, in which he described the periodic table of the elements using geographical terminology (Grunlan and Reimer 1982; Atkins 1995).

In general, for closely related fields such as chemistry and physics or sociology and psychology, it might seem easier to proceed with one of these studies. Yet surprising results could be obtained from attempts to relate more remote fields, such as biology and music. Other perspectives, proximate or distant, may be refreshingly critical and assist progress toward a harmonious unity. Important for the larger project of which this work is a

part are thoughts about potential additional attempts to show connections within the universe of knowledge.

In the spirit of dissertational originality, this project is somewhat experimental in content. Long-term rather than short-term results may more accurately determine failure or success

## CHAPTER 2

### GEOGRAPHY IN THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

#### **Introduction**

We begin the New Testament description of geography with the synoptic gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke -- the first three books in the canon. By considering them in one chapter, we treat only once passages occurring in two or all three of the books. By considering them in the first chapter, we begin with some of the most basic and understandable parts of our central religious document. One might suppose that such a foundational document for Christianity would be heavily loaded with religious ideas and abstractions and therefore be rather non-geographical. Later parts of the New Testament do more closely resemble that description. However, we may be surprised to find that many of the pericopes in the synoptics are permeated with geographical features. To understand some of these texts, a background in geography is advantageous.

Many incidents are recorded in two or all three of the synoptic gospels. The traditional authors are Matthew the apostle, John Mark (associated with the apostle Peter), and Luke the physician (associated with the apostle Paul). Thus all three would have apostolic connections. Most scholars believe that Mark was written first, but a few prefer Matthew. Following a period of oral transmission, the

written documents were composed, with the first century dates of composition uncertain.

Matthew contains five major discourses, including the sermon on the mount and the Olivet discourse. He begins with a genealogy of Jesus and a birth narrative, including the account of the visit of the Magi. Jesus is baptized by John the Baptist and then tempted in the wilderness by the devil. He heals many, including a servant of a centurion. He calls Matthew the tax collector and answers a question about fasting. He commissions the twelve disciples and responds to the doubts of John the Baptist. A collection of parables includes those of the hidden treasure and the mustard seed. He feeds large multitudes twice and predicts his death. He commends little children as potential models for the kingdom of heaven and calls on a rich man to sell his possessions.

Mark is shorter but includes a parable not found in Matthew. He has the passion and resurrection accounts in common with the other evangelists but lacks a birth narrative.

Luke has a formal prologue, a birth narrative, and the sermon on the plain. He has some texts not found in any of the other gospels. These include accounts of the cost of discipleship, the unjust steward, Lazarus and the rich man, the good Samaritan, the prodigal son, the persistent widow, and Zacchaeus the tax collector.

While there are too many geographical references to consider them all in detail, we wish to refer to a large number at least briefly. For those that we do consider in detail, we aim to be carefully selective, representative of the material found in the three books, and comprehensive regarding both the land (or nature) and its human occupancy in their various subdivisions.

We are not primarily interested in the geography of Palestine. Yet because Palestine is the setting for the four gospels, familiarity with its geography may aid in understanding the texts discussed in the next two chapters. Therefore we are including brief summaries of the geography and the climatology of Palestine in Appendices A and B, respectively.

The ordering principle for the discussion is at the level of passages or verses. In some cases it is difficult to separate passages on the basis of the two themes of land and occupancy -- that is, to separate physical and human geography. Yet frequently one of the two foci is dominant in a passage. Therefore we are examining first a set of references deemed primarily physical and then another set primarily human in geographical orientation. A third set is treated separately in conclusion because of an apparent inherent internal unity. We intend first to describe the reference with some contextual content. As the discussion

proceeds, we wish to add analysis and comparison and then synthesis in the chapter conclusion.

## **Physical Geography**

### **Mountains**

Among the common topographical features, the mountain is especially prominent by nature. Primarily we are concerned with the mountain as a geographical feature and the role that it plays in the text of the New Testament. We are not generally concerned with its mythological significance or its meaning in other religious traditions. In the synoptics the mountain is found in several types of setting. It may occur as a place of escape, refuge, and safety; its remoteness, inaccessibility, and abundance of hiding places contribute to this role. It may function as a place close to God; it may be a retreat from the world, giving opportunity for reflection and prayer. These two roles may be combined; when in danger and fleeing for refuge, one may seek divine direction. Further, the mountain may be a place for revelation. If it is remote, it provides a site for private communication from God as well as to God. In the Old Testament, God revealed himself on a mountain to two of its most prominent figures -- Moses and Elijah. The law was also given on a mountain (Rhoads and Michie 1982:66-67).

Mark 11:23 records a saying of Jesus in the context of faith and prayer. If one has adequate faith and has no doubt in his heart, he may command a mountain to be removed

and thrown into the sea and have it done for him. Some have thought that the mountain of reference is the Mount of Olives or the temple mount and that the sea is the not too distant Dead Sea. This event would be barely believable in a traditional geographical context but could become almost routine in the context of thorough conviction or belief. Consider the implications for the records of geography (in books and maps) if this sort of modification of the earth's surface could occur with even modest frequency (Taylor 1952:466-67).

In Matthew's parallel account (21:21), Jesus refers to his own encounter with a fig tree as well as to the mountain. He has just cursed the tree, which soon withered from its roots. With sufficient faith, one could dramatically transform two natural or geographical features. Whether mountain or tree, it seems that geography is pliable in these New Testament passages. In principle nearly any natural (or human) structure on the landscape is susceptible to effortless change (Davies and Allison 1997:153).

In Luke 23:30 mountains again are altered, but the result is different. On the way to Golgotha, Jesus addresses those who are mourning and wailing for him and predicts even much worse times for the city of Jerusalem. He cites a verse from Hosea, in which people call for the mountains to fall on them and the hills to cover them, so terrible would be the suffering. Thus these prominent



terrestrial projections would be changed in form in perhaps many places with immediate consequences for human habitation and life. Perhaps to compare his own suffering with that of those in Jerusalem, he then refers to a green tree and a dry tree -- the latter more easily combustible (Fitzmyer 1985:1498-99; Danker 1988:371-72).

When time of severe distress falls on the land of Judea, Jesus (in all three synoptics) counsels its residents to flee to the mountains (Mark 13:14) where caves may provide protection. In the last days escape from overflowing wickedness would be with flight to the mountains; to remain in the city would be ineffective, as the surrounding armies would be poised to destroy it. These words may point back to similar ones for Lot and his family before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah by sulfur and fire. The mountains near Jerusalem play an important role in these conditions of conflict; though human society is shaken, the mountains endure as a shelter for some. In the earlier passages, mountains were subordinate; here they are more prominent (Fitzmyer 1985:1345; Davies and Allison 1997:347; Taylor 1952:512).

After elaborating on the cost of discipleship, Jesus takes three of his disciples into a high mountain by themselves -- an event found in all three accounts, e.g., Mark 9. Luke notes that Jesus goes to the mountain for prayer. Some have identified the mountain with Mount Tabor

near the Sea of Galilee. However, it is only about 1800 feet high; thus others have suggested Mount Hermon (about 9200 feet), which is northeast of Caesarea Philippi. The background for the episode may be Mount Sinai, Moriah or Carmel; some have also seen enthronement traditions involved as in Psalm 2:6) or eschatological events (Zechariah 14:4). On the mountain Jesus is transfigured, so that his face shines like the sun and his clothes become white as the light. In this vision Moses and Elijah also appear in conversation with Jesus (Fitzmyer 1981:798-802; Davies and Allison 1991:693-95; Taylor 1952:388-89).

The significance of the mountain here may be more symbolic than geographic. God may speak especially to persons specially selected and prepared; he also may do so at certain types of places, such as mountains. Symbolic of power, mountains were sites of theophanies, as indicated earlier. Mountains were seen as enduring from their ancient creation and played a role in the history of salvation. Mountains were thought to be close to the gods and were important in mythology, Semitic and other (note Mount Olympus). Because great distances can be surveyed from mountains so that one may attain knowledge there, the idea of divine revelation on a mountain may have geographical or spatial roots (Davies and Allison 1988:422-23).

Peter suggests that they make three tabernacles -- one for each of the three major persons. The reference in Luke

to a period of about eight days may indicate an allusion to the autumn harvest festival of tabernacles. Especially was this occasion one of thanksgiving for the bounty of the fruit crop (the grain harvest was earlier). The temporary shelters erected at this time of the year represent a special though brief aspect of Hebrew settlement geography. A cloud (a meteorological entity, but also a sign of both divine disclosure and veiling) envelops the group; a special witness is given to Jesus, who is not simply another prophet on an equal level with the other two figures. When Jesus and the three disciples descend from the mountain, he tells them not to reveal what they have seen until after the resurrection (Danker 1988:197-98; Davies and Allison 1991:700).

We have seen that the mountain plays a symbolic role in this narrative, with a background in Israelite and other traditions. In addition, the residential consideration of human geography also appears. The normal significance of geography is maintained but is also extended in figure.

#### The Olivet Discourse

The next topic under physical geography branches out from the first one, as we move from mountains in general to an event on a particular mountain. A concentrated account of the eschatology of Jesus appears in the Olivet discourse -- contained in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21. It is delivered on the Mount of Olives, which is a ridge across

the Kidron Valley east of Jerusalem about a mile long and about 200 feet above the city. At one time it was covered with olive trees, an important crop in the Old Testament period. It has associations with both judgment and resurrection (Davies and Allison 1997:115).

In the Matthean account, Jesus gives signs of his return and of the end of the age (Matthew 24:5-7). First is the appearance of false prophets, who disrupt society with inaccurate claims about events of the end time. Their predictions may cause alterations in settlement patterns, as people relocate to escape coming afflictions. The second sign is international war -- with its destructive potential for a variety of terrestrial and aquatic regions. The next sign is famine, following on the biogeographical and agricultural devastation from conflicts large or small. Those undernourished from food deprivation are vulnerable to the fourth sign -- pestilence or disease outbreaks.

Also mentioned are earthquakes, of special note for geography. Here the apparently stable land collapses, shakes or splits under humanity and its civilization. Earthquakes for the final days may be indicated in the Old Testament, as in Ezekiel 38:19 and Haggai 2:6. The subject matter of geography may be unexpectedly altered, although the study of the phenomenon itself falls under geology and physical geography and the study of the effects under human geography. Thus here an earthquake is not simply a physical

event but a portent of major changes for societies and cultures on the globe. The divine voice speaks through geographical tumult (Taylor 1952:504-05; Fitzmyer 1985:1336-37; Davies and Allison 1997:340-41).

Matthew records other earthquakes with transcendent significance. In ancient times earthquakes are sometimes connected with the coming of a supernatural being, with deaths of great persons or with tragedy in general. At the death of Jesus, the earth quakes when the temple curtain is torn (Matthew 27:51). The Roman centurion at the site, impressed by the coincidence of events as well as perhaps by other acts, declares Jesus to be the Son or a son of God. The fissures in the earth lead to resurrection of saints, so that the death of the Messiah brings life to others. Again at the resurrection, another earthquake takes place (28:2). Thus at both central events of the Christian faith, an earthquake accents their significance (Davies and Allison 1997:632-33).

Later in the discourse (Matthew 24:27-31) are described signs in the heavens or the sky. The return of the Son of Man is compared to lightning from the east being visible in the west. Thus a meteorological feature gives a sign of an event with supergeographical significance. Then sun and moon are darkened, and stars fall. Although we would normally expect solar and lunar eclipses at different times, here both bodies are affected together. Darkness also

occurs over the land at the crucifixion (27:45). These other bodies are subjects of study for astronomy; had we more direct and continuous access to them, they could be studied analogously to the way earth is studied by geography. Planets could be studied using some principles found in geography today, while other principles might need to be modified. Here these bodies in the sky have meaning in addition to the physical. In Luke 21:25, the signs and the roaring of the sea bring distress among nations on the earth. Humans faint from fear with expectation of what is coming on the inhabited earth, the locus of settled occupation. The Son of Man comes in association with clouds, another meteorological phenomenon. The event recalls Daniel 7 and perhaps God's guidance of ancient Israel in a pillar of cloud (Davies and Allison 1997:354-63; Taylor 1952:518-19; Fitzmyer 1981:516; Fitzmyer 1985:1349-50; Danker 1988:335-36).

In addition to visible signs, there is also an audible one; a loud trumpet call signals the parousia. The elect are gathered from the four winds, perhaps meaning the four points of the compass. But wind is also a major meteorological component, along with temperature and precipitation. Then we learn that the words of Jesus will not pass away, although heaven and earth will pass away (24:35). The earth as we know it is subject to change and transformation. We cannot expect the study of geography to

remain forever as it is today. Thus in this pivotal prophecy, the earth itself and phenomena associated with it are subject to unexpected and unusual events. Although these events may be described with reference to geographical features in some form, these features have significance above what is physically evident (Davies and Allison 1997:368).

#### Weather

Pertinent tests in the Olivet discourse lead to consideration of other weather-related texts. In Matthew 5:43 Jesus is discussing love not only for neighbors but also for enemies. Even unbelievers do good to those who do good in return. But if we go beyond and do good to those who hate us, then we become like God in moral character. How do we know that God extends benefits to all? We do so through an inference from the natural order. He causes the sun to rise and sends rain on both evil and good persons (5:45). If both the natural and the moral/spiritual worlds have God as originator and sustainer, one may suppose correspondence between the two. Psalm 19 elaborates on this consonance concerning the divine nature (Davies and Allison 1988:554-56).

The next passage for observation relates to a request by religious leaders to Jesus for a sign from heaven (Matthew 16:1-3). Apparently his previous signs, of what he has said and done on the earth, do not satisfy them. They may have

wished for a sign so unambiguous and dramatic as to dispel any doubt about the authenticity of Jesus' mission, such as perhaps a heavenly voice. Jesus responds with a comparison using meteorological features. He says that in the evening when they see that the sky (or heaven) is red, they say that it will be fair weather. Then in the morning when they see that the sky is red and threatening, they predict that it will be stormy. But although they are able to discern that partly similar conditions may bring different resulting weather, Jesus says that they are unable to discern the more important signs of the critical times in which they are living. The signs which they have already witnessed are enough to convince honest inquirers, so that another sign is unnecessary. Even a heavenly sign might fail to persuade his opponents (Davies and Allison 1991:580-82).

A similar passage in Luke 12:54-56 uses weather phenomena to show the failure of the crowd to interpret the present time. When the people see a cloud forming in the west, from the Mediterranean, they understand that rain is on the way. When a wind blows from the south, which has come across the desert, they say that it will be hot. If they are intelligent enough to discern signs in the weather, they should be able to discern the signs of God through his appointed witness. In both of these passages Jesus uses weather features to rebuke his audience (Marshall 1978:549-50; Fitzmyer 1985:999-1000).



An account appearing in all three gospels relates a weather disturbance on the Sea of Galilee, which is over 600 feet below sea level. The disciples are in a ship with Jesus, who is in the storm sleeping when a furious storm arises on the sea, with waves sweeping over the craft. Believing that their lives are in danger, they awake him. Noting their fearfulness and lack of faith, he rebukes the wind and calls for the sea to be still; a great calm then ensues. Wondering what kind of man this is who can command the elements, the wind and the sea, and have them respond, the disciples are amazed. In nature even if the wind subsides quickly, the waters would take some time to quietly down after a storm. But here the change seems to occur instantaneously rather than progressively (Davies and Allison 1991:69-73; Marshall 1978:333; Beare 1981:215-16; Taylor 1952:274-76).

The word for storm in Matthew literally means earthquake. Since earthquakes appear in eschatological contexts, this passage may serve to encourage believers under severe stress. In the Psalms God is shown to have power over the waters (29:3; 65:7), so that Jesus acts with divine energy as master in creation. Reminiscent too of the incident is the stilling of the raging sea in the book of Jonah (1:15). The reference to rebuking and the use of the verb for quietly in Mark suggest the possibility of demonic connections with the storm. The forces of nature, perhaps

including cosmic forces of evil, are under the control of the originator of the earth and thus the originator of its study through the field of geography (Danker 1988:181).

Another incident perhaps less meteorological than the previous one but with features in common with it we include here. After feeding the five thousand, Jesus has his disciples get into a boat and go ahead of him to the other side of the Sea of Galilee while he dismisses the crowd (Mark 6:45). For spiritual refreshment he goes up to pray by himself on a mountain, where he may perhaps be both physically (in symbol) and spiritually closer to God. When evening arrives, he is alone on the land. Because the winds (apparently from the north) are against the ship, the disciples are straining in their rowing. Now in this account (found in all four gospels except Luke), during the fourth watch of the night between three and six A.M., Jesus goes out toward the disciples, walking on the sea. Thinking it to be a ghost, the disciples are fearful and troubled. But Jesus identifies himself and bids them to be courageous and not afraid. The wind subsides after he enters the ship. As in the previous instance, and in contrast to many of his healing miracles, here Jesus shows his authority over the elemental forces and materials of nature. Able to modify these features at his will is the one who designed them and put them into operation.

While the passage is instrumental in determining the role of geography in the Christian collection of basic books, modern critics have often been skeptical by nature about the possibility of miracles in nature. Included among proposed explanations are the following: 1. The disciples had a hallucinatory experience, which later was perceived as a miracle. 2. Jesus was walking on the shore or wading in the surf and in the morning mist was mistakenly thought to be on the water. 3. The early community freely created the story. Others are content to accept the events at face value. Because this dissertation is concerned with any geographical references in the New Testament, this passage is relevant apart from historical critical analysis. Old Testament background includes Job 9:8, where God treads on the waves of the sea; thus Jesus again incarnates divine powers (Taylor 1952:327-30; Davies and Allison 1991:498-504; Beare 1981:329-32).

In Matthew's account only, an additional incident is recorded while Jesus is still on the water. Peter boldly asks Jesus to ask him to come out on the sea to this amazing figure. Although he begins to approach the teacher while walking on the water himself, he seems hardly able to believe it as he feels the wind; being afraid, he begins to sink. Although immediately rescuing him, Jesus also admonishes him for his lack of faith. Apart from the supernatural work of the creator, the geographical features

and principles work normally for average mortals. This supplementary detail indicates that not only does Jesus himself rule over divinely-designed nature but also that he can share his power with others, with implications for how the subject matter and the study of geography might be modified by trustworthy humans (Davies and Allison 1991:507).

### Phytogeography

Having examined a number of texts relating primarily to abiotic physical geographical features, we now turn to the biotic aspects of physical geography. Wishing to discuss references to both plants and animals, we begin with the former. Phytogeography is the biogeography of plant life. Other botanical texts we intend to cover later under human geography in discussing modification of the land by its human occupants through agriculture.

In the course of pronouncing a series of woes on the scribes (or teachers of the law) and the Pharisees, Jesus finds hypocritical their practice of tithing on three herbs (mint, dill, and cummin) while neglecting the weightier matters of the law -- such as justice, mercy, and faith (Matthew 23:23). In rabbinic sources are listed the last two but not the first as subject to tithe. Thus the audience was attempting to be especially careful about a relatively minor matter while leaving aside what really did matter. In Israel mint, a perennial, grows along

watercourses and swamps and is used as a condiment due to its aromatic oil. Dill and cummin are annuals and are used for flavoring. Dill is used for seasoning and as a carminative, cummin as an anti-spasmodic (Davies and Allison 1997:294-95; Beare 1981:454-55; Zohary 1982:88-89).

In a similar passage in Luke 11:42, Jesus refers to mint, rue and other garden herbs as objects of tithing by religious leaders while they neglect justice and the love of God. As in the Matthean verse, Jesus says that they should attend to the smaller points but subordinate them to the larger ones. These smaller plants may be part of a design in nature to help humans distinguish the significant from the trivial. Containing an essential oil and used as a condiment, rue is also frequently grown as an ornamental plant in gardens. In these two verses, the herbs function as plants of nature without symbolic or allegorical meaning. But they are used in a contrast to highlight some of the most central concepts in biblical religion -- reminding readers of the justice, mercy, and humble walk with God specified in Micah 6:8.

Among the parables of Jesus is one that compares the kingdom of God to a mustard seed (Matthew 13:31-32) which is said to be the smallest of seeds. Yet when it is grown, it becomes the largest of garden plants and allows birds to perch in its branches. The annual herb *Brassica nigra* or black mustard is probably intended, used medicinally and the

source of mustard seed oil in biblical times. The seed is not the smallest known today (e.g., the orchid seed is smaller), but it was perhaps the smallest seed used by farmers and gardeners in Palestine. With a rapid growth rate, it could reach about ten feet in one season, although it does not become a tree. The characteristics of the herb may be used to illustrate the idea that the kingdom begins in insignificance but eventually will spread throughout the world (Davies and Allison 1991:415-19; Zohary 1982:93; Taylor 1952:270).

In Matthew 17:20 and Luke 17:6, the mustard seed is used to illustrate faith. With faith as a mustard seed, i.e., a small or weak faith, one may bring about the removal of a mountain in the first case and may cause a mulberry tree to be uprooted and planted in the sea in the second case. The tree here may be the black mulberry; Luke 19:4 apparently refers to the sycamore fig tree, which produces figs edible but inferior to those of the true fig. Extensive and deep is the root system of the mulberry or sycamine tree; it would be more difficult than some to uproot and unusual to plant it in the sea (Davies and Allison 1991:727; Fitzmyer 1985:1143-44; Danker 1988:287-88; Marshall 1978:644).

In Matthew 24:32 (with parallels in Mark and Luke) appears a parable of the fig tree. While most Palestinian trees are evergreen, the fig tree loses its leaves in the winter -- so that its branches become bare, the tree

appearing to be dead. But it begins to leaf in late spring -- with summer following, as the parable indicates. By analogy when certain events described by Jesus take place, the kingdom of God is near. The first fruit named in the Bible, the fig is mentioned with the vine in Micah 4:4 in picturing peace in the kingdom (Beare 1981:472; Davies and Allison 1997:364-65; Taylor 1952:520; Zohary 1982:58-59).

In another parable (Luke 13:6-9), Jesus tells of a fig tree planted in a vineyard (not unusual), which does not bear fruit for three years (unusual). Although the owner is ready to have it cut down since it is using up the soil (or the earth, literally), the gardener requests one more year to work with the ground and add fertilizer before taking final action. The story illustrates God's mercy in giving additional time for repentance; yet judgment, though delayed, still follows rejection (Fitzmyer 1985:1008; Marshall 1978:55-56; Danker 1988:260).

In considering these plants, the text treats them variously. The sycamore fig appears in a narrative without much reference to its specificity, expect that it is a sturdy tree and capable of supporting a man (as it does in 19:4). In the other three cases (mustard seed, mulberry, and fig), the traits of the vegetation serve to illustrate spiritual lessons. Are these botanical distinctions simply accidents of nature, which Jesus uses to convey his message? Or is a larger design in nature indicated, so that truths of

biogeography may teach humans about behavior in this life and life in the world to come? Though such issues one may ignore in contexts of scientific skepticism, for full apprehension of truth one may need to address them.

In showing that we need not worry about earthly concerns but should rather attend more fully to discipleship, Jesus refers to the lilies of the field (Luke 12:27-28), perhaps indicating lilylike flowers. Though they neither labor nor spin, God cares for them. While identification is uncertain, the colorful crown anemone of early spring is a possibility. Even the so temporary grass of the field God clothes. These words show a benign divine attitude toward the environment. Without an inner eye for the transcendent, we may miss additional meaning in the geographical; yet the latter also functions in its own sphere (Zohary 1982:170; Fitzmyer 1985:977-79; Marshall 1978:528-29; Attfield 1991:28).

A notable detail Mark includes in his account of the feeding of the five thousand. The people sit down in groups on the green grass (6:39). The impression of a barren wilderness this detail may correct and may point to springtime in Galilee (Taylor 1952:323).

The synoptic texts thus are able to incorporate references to botanical life into their message. In some cases they are distinctly purposeful; in others they add



local color. In any case they are evidence for the fuller description of geography in the New Testament.

### Zoogeography

While not encompassing what we would find in a zoo, zoogeographical references in the New Testament are not that sparse either. Zoogeography is the biogeography of animal life. As with the section on plants, this one on animals is supplemented by coverage for agriculture under human geography.

A few verses earlier in the Lukan passage on anxiety previously considered, Jesus cites the ravens; although they neither sow nor reap and have neither storeroom nor barn, yet God feeds them. Not that we need not work but that we need not worry do these natural examples advise; Jesus is not commending sloth. Though it is listed as an unclean bird in the Levitical dietary laws, God provides for them as they cry for food (Psalm 147:9). The first bird mentioned in the Bible by name, the raven has endurance in flight and was sent out by Noah as the waters of the flood receded (Beare 1981:186; Fitzmyer 1985:978; Moller-Christensen and Jorgensen 1965:176).

In both Matthew (10:29) and Luke (12:6) Jesus assures disciples of God's concern for them. He does so by pointing out his concern even for sparrows, sold in the market for a low price. Yet not one falls to the ground apart from his will; not one is forgotten by God. Since humans are worth

more than many sparrows, they should not fear. Again we may note God's favorable disposition toward the environment, quite possibly as a model for Christians (Fitzmyer 1985:960; Davies and Allison 1991:207-08; Attfield 1983:374).

Near the end of his life, Jesus enters the temple area and drives out those buying and selling (Matthew 21:12), overturning the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of those selling doves, which were offerings of the poor. After the raven Noah also sent out a dove, which returned one time with an olive leaf in its bill, a modern symbol of peace. In addition to associations with innocence and purity, the dove became a symbol of the Holy Spirit. When sending out the twelve disciples, Jesus said that they should be as innocent as doves (Matthew 10:16). Apparently a childlike simplicity may be intended; one's dedication to duty is so single-minded that his or her intent is clear to others (Moller-Christensen and Jorgensen 1965:135; Davies and Allison 1991:181; Davies and Allison 1997:138).

Also were they to be as shrewd or wise as serpents or snakes. Thus two animals picture in balance qualities needed by these missionaries -- prudent and alert, yet with integrity. Later when the believers go forth with a larger mission, to all creation (Mark 16:18), Christ assures protection from snakes which they might pick up -- scarcely a guarantee, however, for foolish attempts at the sensational.

The teacher teaches his learners to ask, seek, and knock (Luke 11:9) -- that they may receive, find, and have the door opened. He goes on to ask if a father, when asked by his son for a fish, would give him a snake instead. Although the two animals are similar in appearance, the narrative implies that the father would not practice such deception. Likewise if the son asks for an egg, the father would not give him a scorpion -- which, when rolled up, may resemble an egg. It follows that neither would God fail to give the Holy Spirit to those asking for it. In sending out the seventy Jesus gives authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions (Luke 10:19), two symbols of evil in the Old Testament (Fitzmyer 1985:863, 915).

A species of scorpion found in Israel is about five to seven inches long, with four pairs of legs and eight eyes. To hold and cut up the prey, upper and lower jaws have pincers. With six narrowing body joints, the tail curls up and over the scorpion's head. At the tip of the tail is a poison sting, used to paralyze a victim held by the pincers. Both serpents and scorpions did Israel find in the wilderness (Deuteronomy 8:15). In describing the rebellious house of Israel, God tells Ezekiel that he may be living among scorpions (Ezekiel 2:6).

We see the text using concrete examples from the animal world to teach more abstract principles. The recurrent applicability of natural features familiar to the audience

inclines one to ask whether transnatural purposes may be built into geography (Moller-Christensen and Jorgensen 1965:227-28).

The diet of John the Baptist, the herald of the messiah, was locusts and wild honey (Matthew 3:4). His ascetic lifestyle may be seen as a protest against self-indulgence. Locusts may also form huge hordes, devouring vegetation as they traverse the land. In the eighth plague on Egypt at the time of the exodus (Exodus 10:15), they covered the face of the land (Beare 1981:90-91; Davies and Allison 1988:296-97; Moller-Christensen and Jorgensen 1965:219-20).

In a weather-related passage discussed earlier, Jesus' opponents request a sign from heaven. On another occasion to a similar request, he responds differently (Matthew 12:40). Referring to the Old Testament narrative in the book of Jonah, he gives the sign that just as Jonah was in the belly of the great fish for three days and three nights, so he will remain for that length of time in the heart of the earth. Even though the whale is not a fish, some have supposed that that mammal is intended here. Although this identification seems unlikely, other speculations are also uncertain. Analogous to the earth (the heart of geography) in the declaration of the sign, this unknown creature has a role in designating the time between the two great events of Christianity -- the crucifixion and the resurrection (Moller-Christensen and Jorgensen 1965:249-51).

While Jesus is walking along the road, a man says to him that he will follow him wherever he goes. Jesus warns him to count the cost; while foxes have holes and birds have nests (Luke 9:58), the Son of Man lives as a homeless wanderer and experiences the rejection which his followers must be prepared for. The holes of this predatory animal were frequently found in Palestine. In the Old Testament sometimes the jackal rather than the fox may be intended; the former regularly eats carrion while the latter rarely does so. When Jesus refers to Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee, as a fox (Luke 13:32), he probably has in mind a sly or crafty person (Marshall 1978:410, 571; Fitzmyer 1981:834; Fitzmyer 1985:1031; Moller-Christensen and Jorgensen 1965:38-39).

As he is about to enter Jerusalem, Jesus has his disciples bring to him a donkey and her colt. Then Jesus sits on cloaks placed on the colt and comes into the city (Matthew 21:1-5) in fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9. There it says that your king (of Zion or Jerusalem) comes to you righteous, having salvation, and meek, riding on a donkey and a colt. To show himself a man of peace and thus innocent of charges of sedition against the Romans, the Messiah rides not on a magnificent war horse but on a related mammal of gentle bearing. In the triumphal entry, the crowd is disappointed in part that the promised Messiah seems not to be realizing their historic expectations. Here

the contrast between the natures of two similar animals the narrative uses to picture a fundamental facet of the new covenant (Taylor 1952:452; Davies and Allison 1997:119-20).

In ancient times, the dog was vagrant and half-wild instead of being a close friend of humans. Apparently dogs belonged to the community rather than to a family or a house, living and sleeping in the village streets. Baying dogs would meet strangers arriving in town while ignoring residents. As darkness approached they would roam in search of food and accept refuse from houses, serving as garbage collecting agents; even carrion was on their menu.

When Jesus is approached by a Canaanite woman who wishes for him to exorcise a demon from her daughter, he at first ignores her (Matthew 15:21-28), declaring that only to the lost sheep of Israel is he sent. As she persists, he says that one does not cast the children's bread to dogs. After she continues by pointing out that dogs eat crumbs which fall from the table of their masters, Jesus honors her faith with healing. The word for dogs here is a diminutive form, perhaps a pet or house dog rather than the wild type described above. Apparently dogs represent Gentiles, who are initially outside the main ministry of Jesus (Moller-Christensen and Jorgensen 1965:34-35; Davies and Allison 1991:553-54).

Matthew 7:6 portrays the reputation of the scavenging dog; one should not give a holy thing to the dogs, lest they

turn and viciously attack. Likewise in this verse, one should not cast pearls before swine, or they will trample them with their feet. Perhaps not the domestic swine but the wild boar is intended. A well-known unclean quadruped in the Old Testament food laws, the swine may eat many items, including carrion. The prodigal son falls to the degrading level of feeding swine and also shares their food (Luke 15:15-16). Yet not deterred by transgressions of the past, the father shows the extent of his forgiveness as he embraces his son on his return (Moller-Christensen and Jorgensen 1965:112-13; Davies and Allison 1988:674-77; Beare 1981:190-91; Marshall 1978:608).

Further elaboration of the role or reputation of swine occurs in the incident of the healing of one or two demoniacs in the region of the Gadarenes or Gerasenes (Mark 5:1-20 and parallels). Both Gadara and Gerasa were members of the Decapolis, a league of ten cities characterized by Hellenistic culture, mostly east of the Jordan and the Sea of Galilee. Other members included Scythopolis, Pella, Damascus, and Philadelphia (modern Amman). The individual mentioned by Mark and Luke is able to break chains used to bind him and lives not in a house but in the tombs. The multiple demons beg Jesus not to send them into the abyss, perhaps the site of their eschatological confinement. Jesus casts out the demons and at their request sends them into a herd of about two thousand swine feeding on a hillside. The

herd then rushes down the steep bank into the sea and drowns. Thus unclean spirits enter unclean animals and no longer hold humans in bondage (Fitzmyer 1981:739; Davies and Allison 1988:420; Danker 1988:183).

The camel is a ruminant (chewing its cud), but it lacks the other qualification (a split hoof) to be a clean animal. The biblical camel is the dromedary (single-humped), long-legged with a thick covering of hair. Its long, curved neck and rather long head are noteworthy. Well-equipped to live in the desert, it can hold large quantities of water and go many days at times without water. In addition, it can store food in the hump and thus also refrain from eating for long periods. Its nostrils may be closed to prevent penetration of sand, while its thick leather-like lips permit it to eat rough desert vegetation (Moller-Christensen and Jorgensen 1965:23-25).

In keeping with his austere manner of living, John the Baptist wore a garment of camel's hair (Matthew 3:4). Doing so signified his prophetic calling in the tradition of Elijah, whose return in some form was expected (Davies and Allison 1988:295; Beare 1981:90).

On one occasion in a context of wealth in contrast to the previous context, Jesus says that it is more difficult for a rich man to enter the kingdom than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle (Matthew 19:24). With a tiny opening is compared the largest of Palestinian animals. Yet



to the astonished disciples, he replies that though salvation would be impossible with men, it would not be so with God -- for whom all things are possible (Davies and Allison 1997:52; Fitzmyer 1985:1204).

Again contrasting large and small, Christ accuses his opponents of straining out a gnat while swallowing a camel (Matthew 23:24). Strict observers would filter drinking water to ensure not ingesting a tiny unclean animal, while figuratively swallowing a large unclean animal. While concerned about minor, measurable matters, they pass over major, less measurable ones (Davies and Allison 1997:295-96; Beare 1981:455-56).

As we conclude discussion of the synoptic material classified approximately under physical geography, we have seen rich and varied accounts of natural phenomena. With background from texts outside the New Testament, our references showed mountains to have symbolic and sometimes surprising roles -- surprising especially to the naive or first-time reader or listener (remembering the high percentage frequency of the spoken word for communication in ancient generations). For those long familiar with these texts, it may require special effort to take a fresh, open-eyed approach of appreciation. In the prophetic discourse on the Mount of Olives, eschatological events occur in geographical contexts. When the narrative draws on meteorological features, it illustrates human failings to

perceive divine actions. Also present are authentications of Jesus' authority and power as an agent of God. Within biogeography the plants discussed have natural meaning in context but also present some lessons which raise questions about a hidden inner purpose in geography. Guiding our thoughts along challenging channels are the diverse and numerous examples of animal life. While the encounters of geographical features with the senses are important, much additional meaning is potentially available.

### **Human Geography**

#### **Agriculture**

To begin examination of the texts under human geography, we look at economic activities which inform about human occupancy of the land. Purposely or accidentally, humans modify the landscape through the work that they do in producing, distributing, and consuming goods and services -- that is, in providing for the material welfare of humanity. Because of its fundamental importance in general and its frequent appearance in particular in the biblical world, we first see what our texts say about agriculture.

In his preparation of the seventy for their mission (Luke 10:2), Jesus notes that the harvest is large but that too few are the laborers. Here the figurative harvest recalls the picture in the Old Testament of the harvest as the end-time judgment of the nations (Joel 3:13). He asks his disciples to ask God to send more workers. The

missionary task may be seen as part of a collection of events constituting the end. The image of harvest fits well the calling in of believers, who wait for the Lord's servants to labor unselfishly. The fall festival of tabernacles, a notable harvest festival, also has typological implications for the process of salvation (Fitzmyer 1985:846; Davies and Allison 1991:149; Marshall 1978:416).

Before one may harvest, one must sow. Illustrating this thought is the parable of the sower, found in all three synoptics. In Mark's account (4:1-8) Jesus begins by teaching the large crowd by the lake, with the people on the shore near the edge of the water. Both land and water appear immediately to lend clear geographical substance to the account. In calling for the attention of the sizable audience at the outset, he may be starting to warn that not all hearers become productive doers. As the farmer sows seed, the germ of plant life, both biogeography and human geography now figure in the narrative.

On four different kinds of soil does he sow the seed. Falling on the path, the first seed is trampled on; the birds of the air, representing zoogeography, come along and eat it. Through some fields went paths and roads, so that some of the soil was too compacted for germination. Because little soil is on the rocky ground where the second seed falls, it also presents poor possibilities for productive

agriculture. In Galilee the rock below may sometimes break through the soil where it is thin and reach the surface. Although the seed begins to operate, the scorching sun (a central meteorological feature) withers the plants, which lack a developed root. Although we include this parable within human geography because of its agricultural setting, a number of physical geographical features are present also. In their geographical effects, humans are closely linked with the land, the water, and the atmosphere.

Among thorns, which choke the plants, falls the third seed. These plants do not bear fruit; but the seed lifetimes are steadily increasing. Another plant type, a competing one, appears -- for which no exact species indicated. The farmer may have only cut down the thorns without removing them; thus they may grow back and dominate the desired plant. In the climax of the parable, on good land falls the fourth seed and is productive, the increase being larger perhaps as the quality of the soil improves (Taylor 1952:252-54; Davies and Allison 1991:383-84; Fitzmyer 1981:703-04; Crossan 1973:244-46).

Jesus continues by giving the parable a symbolic application as he interprets it, the seed being the word of God. In the first two cases, it is the devil and trouble or persecution which cause the individual to be spiritually unproductive. In the third case, the cares of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth impede progress toward a

spiritual harvest for new converts. Only in the fourth case does the person hear and continue to bring forth a crop, a person with an honest and good heart. Peculiar to Luke's gospel is the last expression, from Greek humanism and denoting noble generosity.

Once one perceives the parable to be about the proclamation of the word, even an uneducated but locally observant hearer might be able to identify with the interpretation. One more sophisticated could discern additional natural meaning. In the first case, the birds suggest an external enemy, apart from the earth. The rocky ground for the second sowing indicates a shallow, superficial reception, insufficient to survive under stress. Thorns suggest something injurious, rooted in the earth. On good soil is protection from all three weaknesses -- with resistance to aggression from the outside, endurance, and victory over obstacles on the inside (Davies and Allison 1991:397-98; Fitzmyer 1981:714; Danker 1988:177).

In this passage the geographical features play a literal or physical role. Indeed the story is primarily about these features, which are interesting in themselves and which make that story more comprehensible. But in addition, the features also have figurative or symbolic meaning. Not content is the New Testament geographical perspective to discuss them only in the normal setting of geography. The thorns, the sun, and the seed, for instance, have

significance beyond what we would study in a geography curriculum.

Following the parable of the sower, Jesus speaks another one concerning the kingdom of God -- the parable of the wheat and the tares (Matthew 13:24-30). In this case, the farmer sows good seed while the quality of the soil is not indicated. Then while everyone is sleeping, an enemy sows tares among the wheat. When the owner's servants ask if they should pull up the tares, the owner says no and elects to let both grow together until the harvest. To remove the tares now might involve uprooting some of the wheat also. At harvest time, the tares are to be bound into bundles for burning -- not only for destruction but also for use as fuel, since wood may be scarce in Palestine. The wheat, however, the servants bring to the granary.

The tares or weeds seem most likely to be darnel, which resembles a wheat-like grass and whose grains are similar in size and shape to wheat grains and harbor a poisonous fungus. When mixed together, the two grains yield an inferior product.

As with the parable of the sower, Jesus gives an explicit interpretation, identifying several figures in the story. The Son of Man sows the good seed (the children of the kingdom), while the devil sows the tares (the children of the evil one). At the harvest (the end of the age), the harvesters (angels) separate the two groups. In this

eschatological scene then, the wicked are punished and the righteous rewarded.

In this sharply drawn narrative, a setting from agricultural life when interpreted is used to portray a distant event with graphic impact. The parable comports well with the urgency of the message of the kingdom in the ministries of both John the Baptist and Jesus. Not difficult is it to imagine that for the listeners the meaning of agriculture in its geographical differentiation would be dramatically altered (Beare 1981:305-06, 311-13; Davies and Allison 1991:426-31; Zohary 1982:161).

Only in Mark does another parable in this series appear (4:26-29). After scattering seed on the ground, a man notes that the seed sprouts and grows although he does not understand the process. When the grain is ripe, he harvests it with a sickle. This parable Jesus does not interpret, so that several possibilities have been offered. They include both a present reference in the time of Jesus and a future reference in the eschaton (that is, the time of the end). In either case we seem to overpass the limits of conventional human agricultural geography (Taylor 1953:265-66).

Thus far our geographical examples have been about grains or wheat in particular. A second major crop in Israel was the fruit of the vine. Another lesson about the kingdom appears in the parable of the workers in the

vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16). Early in the morning the owner of a vineyard hires workers for the day at a set wage, a denarius. As the day progresses, he goes into town a few more times to employ additional workers. Finally even at the eleventh hour (5 P.M.), he hires others. That the owner looks for workers so late in the day may indicate an urgency in gathering the harvest. Only for the first group is the wage agreement specified.

The treatment of the workers at the end of the day is the unusual feature in the story; all workers receive the same pay regardless of the length of time of their labor. Because those who were hired first suppose that they should receive more, they complain. Yet the owner says that he is keeping his contract with them but is also being generous with the last employees. The last will be first and the first last. In many ways the story accurately reflects an aspect of local economic life. But in a departure therefrom the story enunciates a principle about the nature of the kingdom, contrary to human expectations (Davies and Allison 1997:71-76; Beare 1981:402-04).

Another parable about a vineyard (Matthew 21:33-46) also has features reflecting Galilean rural conditions; while its interpretation is uncertain, it appears to be related to salvation history. A landowner plants a vineyard, puts a wall around it, and rents it out to farmers before leaving on a journey. At harvest time, he sends servants



(representing the Old Testament prophets) to collect the fruit. But the tenants mistreat those servants; the owner then sends more servants. Some the tenants beat, while others they kill. Finally the owner sends his son (representing Christ), thinking that the tenants will respect him; but they cast him out of the vineyard and kill him. Citing Psalm 118:22, Jesus says that the stone which the builders reject becomes the cornerstone or copestone. Through the use of imagery from the vineyard, the parable sends a powerful message to the people of Israel or to their leaders. Not with impunity may the native tenants abuse privileges indefinitely when there are others who produce fruit faithfully (Davies and Allison 1997:184-88; Beare 1981:427-31).

Not only were grains and fruits produced in local agriculture but livestock were raised as well. To illustrate a trait of God's nature, Jesus tells a parable about sheep (Luke 15:4-7). If a man has 100 sheep and loses one of them, he leaves the 99 in the wilderness and searches for the one wandering sheep. When he finds it, he calls on his neighbors to rejoice with him. More joy is there likewise in heaven over one sinner (lost sheep) who repents than over 99 who do not need or who think that they do not need to repent. As a commentary on divine concern for the environment (disinterested care for animals) may we also view this parable. To retrieve the hundredth sheep would

seem to be of slight (if any) benefit to the shepherd; yet he does so anyway (Danker 1988:274; Fitzmyer 1985:1076-78; Attfield 1983:375; Attfield 1991:29).

His ministry of teaching and healing takes Jesus through many towns and villages. When he sees the crowds, he has compassion for them -- because they are harassed and helpless, as sheep without a shepherd (Matthew 9:36). As a messianic shepherd one may view his responsibility, called to gather the flock. Because his role may be like that of Moses, this text recalls the need for a replacement for that earlier shepherd, so that Israel might not be as sheep which have no shepherd (Numbers 27:17). The narrative later develops this imagery; with the striking of the shepherd (Matthew 26:31), the sheep are scattered (Davies and Allison 1991:147-48; Beare 1981:510).

In a dramatic scene of judgment, the Son of Man sits with all nations (pictured as sheep and goats) gathered before him (Matthew 25:31-46). When a shepherd has a mixed flock of sheep and goats, he may separate them in the fold. It may be wise to set apart the relatively belligerent goats from the weaker and more placid sheep. Especially because of its wool, the sheep was the more commercially valuable. In the text the figure on the throne divides the people, putting the sheep on his right hand and the goats on the left. Those on the right, the blessed, inherit the kingdom; those on the left, the cursed, depart into eternal fire.

What distinguishes the two groups is not that the sheep performed heroic acts while the goats perpetrated heinous crimes. Rather the former unobtrusively carried out simple deeds of charity while the latter failed to do so. The list includes feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, taking in the stranger, clothing the naked, visiting the sick, and coming to those in prison. Utilizing background from animal farming has helped to clarify the solemn topic of judgment in the last day (Beare 1981:492-96; Moller-Christensen and Jorgensen 1965:44,97-99; Davies and Allison 1997:423-31).

A few other texts enlighten concerning God's concern not only for humans but also for animals. In a synagogue when Jesus sees a man with a withered hand, the question arises about healing on the sabbath (Matthew 12:10-12). If one of your sheep falls into a pit on the sabbath, he says, would you not lift it out? How much more then should one be ready to heal a human on the sabbath. While the focus of the remark is on humans, also evident is an attitude of care for animals. Again in Luke 14:5, Jesus asks if one would not pull out a son or an ox that falls into a well on the sabbath. Further (Luke 13:15) on the sabbath, does not one untie an ox or a donkey from the stall and lead it out to water? It is natural that the creator should have compassion on the creatures of his creation and commend it

in the conduct of others (Fitzmyer 1985:1013, 1041-42; Davies and Allison 1991:319-20; Beare 1981:272-73).

### Occupations

In addition to a principal economic activity such as agriculture, other human occupations impinge on human occupancy of the land. Though not necessarily directly dependent on the land, those in these other businesses, trades or professions depend on those occupants who are so dependent.

Of the twelve disciples, four of them are fishermen who respond to a call from Jesus related in Matthew 4:18-22. As he walks by the Sea of Galilee, Jesus sees two brothers (Simon Peter and Andrew), casting a net into the sea. To the edges of the circular casting net stones were tied; the net thus sank rapidly, encompassing fish. By a rope tied to the middle, the net was lifted; since the stones would be gathered together, the fish would remain trapped in the net. As with the call of Elisha by Elijah, Jesus summons them when they are at work, so that the break with their present occupation is emphasized. He bids them to come and follow him; whereas they are now fishers of fish, he will make them fishers of men (or humans). Immediate and sacrificial is the response of the brothers; they leave their nets, follow him, and renounce their old life in the Matthean account. In accord with 8:22 and in contrast with Elisha (1 Kings

19:19-21), they say no farewell to their father, embarking on a course of self-denial.

Going along the shore a little further apparently, Jesus sees two other brothers -- James and John, sons of Zebedee. In this case they are mending their nets when the call comes. Again they depart at once, leaving the boat and their father. Though these human occupants of the land and the water on the land serve their needs and those of others on the land, the nascent vocation in fishing promises to serve needs greater than those pertaining to this land (Beare 1981:117-18, Davies and Allison 1988:396-402; Carter 1997:66-69; Hanson and Oakman 1998:106-110).

In Luke's extended description of the call (5:1-11), the acceptance of discipleship is less abrupt than in Matthew, psychologically prepared for by witness of Jesus' ministry. Their nets begin to break at a great haul of fish, so that all four fishermen are astonished. Despite this remarkable success in their earthly vocation, they bring the boats to the land and respond without delay to transfer to a vocation more urgent and ultimately rewarding (Marshall 1978:199; Danker 1988:115-18; Fitzmyer 1981:559-63).

Those who collected direct taxes (poll tax and land tax) were known as tax collectors, directly employed by the Roman occupiers. Those who collected indirect taxes (tolls, tariffs, imposts, and customs), known as toll collectors, were often employed in local tollhouses. They were agents

of a chief toll collector who had purchased a franchise. Opportunities for dishonesty and extortion were available through the manner of administration of the system. One of the chief toll collectors (Zacchaeus) Jesus confronts in Jericho and declares that he (Jesus) must stay at his house that day (Luke 19:1-10). Although the people murmur that Jesus is the guest of a sinful man, he says that the Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost and that salvation has come to his house. Thus even those in a despised profession the shepherd cares for as children called to the kingdom (Davies and Allison 1988:558; Danker 1988:88; Fitzmyer 1981:469-70).

One of the twelve disciples and the traditional author of the first gospel is a toll collector and also receives a call from Jesus at his work station (Matthew 9:9). Matthew arises, leaves everything, and follows the teacher. Although not a chief toll collector, he is prosperous enough to provide a banquet for some of his associates and Jesus at his (Matthew's) house. Though criticized for eating with this crowd, Jesus says that he is calling not the righteous but sinners to repentance (Fitzmyer 1981:589-91; Beare 1981:225-26).

As a prologue to the ministry of Jesus, John the Baptist preaches a baptism of repentance for forgiveness of sins (Luke 3:3). At the Jordan River, crowds come to be baptized by him -- among whom are toll collectors, who ask him what

they should do. His answer addresses the corruption in their work, that they are to exact no more than is appointed to them.

Also present at the proclamation of John are soldiers -- not Roman soldiers but probably Jewish men enlisted in the forces of the tetrarch Herod Antipas, who also ask what they should do. While not called to leave their profession, they are told to avoid its sins. They should neither extort money nor rob by false accusation, and they should be content with their pay (Danker 1988:89-90; Fitzmyer 1981:470-71; Marshall 1978:143-44).

Careful perception by a merchant searching for fine pearls is the topic in another Matthean parable (13:45-46). When he finds one pearl of special value, he sells all that he has and buys that one item. In two similar parables (that of the talents, Matthew 25, and that of the pounds, Luke 19), those who trade with or put to work the money given to them are commended, while the one who does not is condemned.

Not in comparable terms does the text describe those who are selling in the temple area (Mark 11:15-17). In one explanation, Jesus drives out those selling sacrificial animals, oil, and meal and those buying (perhaps pilgrims) these items. But it may be that the buyers include temple officials engaged in commercial transactions for temple supplies rather than worshipers, whom Jesus perhaps would

not have expelled. He also overthrows the tables of the money changers, who change the Greek or Roman coinage of pilgrims into Tyrian coinage for payment of the temple tax. Sellers may have overcharged pilgrims; in addition, commerce may be appropriate in some places, while not in others (Taylor 1952:462-63; Fitzmyer 1985:1267-68; Davies and Allison 1997:137-140).

In a parable involving economic activity, a rich man has a manager accused of wasting his property (Luke 16:1-9). As the manager no longer may retain his position, he must draw up an account of his transactions to give to the master. He decides to reduce the debts owed to the master and thus win favor from the debtors. Although neither dishonesty nor falsification of accounts is approved, the master praises the manager because he acts prudently. Believers may also use material wealth wisely (although not dishonestly) for enduring benefits (Fitzmyer 1985:1098-99; Marshall 1978:614).

Matthew describes Jesus as the carpenter's son (13:55), so that Joseph is a carpenter. In Mark, however, it is Jesus himself who is the carpenter (6:3), the son of Mary, with no mention of Joseph. The term for carpenter may mean carpenter, mason, woodworker, artisan, metalsmith or builder; most probably carpenter is intended. Thus perhaps Jesus was an apprentice of his father. The hard labor required for that trade and the rugged outdoor life which he



may have led may indicate that Jesus was physically robust, in contrast to his portrayal in many paintings (Taylor 1952:300; Davies and Allison 1991:456; Oakman 1986:176-82).

#### Urban Geography

Much of Jesus' teaching took place in urban areas of various sizes. Born in Bethlehem and brought up in Nazareth, Jesus later lived in Capernaum on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee and made it the center of his ministry. The home of Peter and Andrew, it is mentioned neither in the Old Testament nor outside the gospels in the New Testament and is called Jesus' own city (Matthew 9:1). He traveled around Galilee in the villages and towns (Mark 1:39; 6:6; Luke 8:1), thus not remaining only in a few places. When some try to detain him, he says that he must preach the kingdom of God in other towns also, because he was sent forth for that purpose (Luke 4:43) (Rhoads and Michie 1982:68; Fitzmyer 1981:557; Davies and Allison 1988:377-78).

Not without responsibility required of his hearers was the proclamation of Jesus. He denounces two cities of Galilee, Chorazin and Bethsaida; if the miracles performed there had been performed in the Phoenician cities of Tyre and Sidon north of Palestine, the inhabitants would have repented long ago (Matthew 11:21). Next he singles out Capernaum, whose residents had many opportunities to observe him and to respond to his message; if his mighty works had

been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. Later he finds Jerusalem guilty of killing the prophets and stoning those sent to it (Luke 13:34); they also are unwilling to heed his appeals. While he performs many healings and teaches the crowds, some are unpersuaded (Davies and Allison 1991:266-69; Fitzmyer 1985:853-55, 1036).

For those who do well with the pounds entrusted to them in the parable of Luke 19, the reward is authority over a number of cities. Evidently these cities are in the kingdom acquired by the nobleman who distributes the money. That figure is like Jesus, who does not immediately receive the kingdom in power. Instead a period of undetermined length of follows his first appearance before he returns as ruler (Danker 1988:308; Fitzmyer 1985:1236).

The light of the world Jesus designates his disciples (Matthew 5:14). Then he says that a city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. While some have thought of the new Jerusalem, it appears that no specific city is in view. Believers are to radiate an example not to gain praise for themselves but so that observers may praise the Father in heaven. The ones on earth are transparent for the one in heaven (Davies and Allison 1988:475-78; Beare 1981:138).

In the preceding discussion of passages relating to human occupancy of the land, special attention has been given to economic activities. Two parables of the kingdom,

grounded in agricultural geography for grains have significant figurative meaning. Balancing these are two others about the vineyard, site of a major Palestinian crop, again with a prominent dimension beyond the naturally geographical. In texts about livestock production, the care of God not only for humans but also for animals was noted. Imagery of the separation of sheep and goats helped to illustrate judgment of all humanity. Among occupations other than agriculture, two of them had representatives among the twelve disciples -- four fishermen and a toll collector. Also appearing in the text are the trades or professions of soldier, merchant, manager, and carpenter. Usually characteristics associated with the occupation figure in the passages and also often a meaning surpassing normal expectations. Examples showed that the urban areas in which Jesus ministered were also held accountable for what they heard. Features from human geography then are seen through a variety of illustrations to be significant in themselves and often beyond themselves.

### **The Sermon and the World**

For the last class of texts, we consider several from the sermon on the mount (Matthew 5-7) and a few partially related ones concerning the earth or the world as a whole. Among the most well-known parts of the teachings of Jesus (and also fundamental to the Christian religion), the sermon is associated with a geographical feature treated earlier in

the chapter. Similarly, Luke's analogous sermon on the plain (Luke 6) or plateau, a level plain, has geographical connections.

The first passage concerns trees and their fruits (Matthew 7:15-20). People do not find grapes on thorns or figs on thistles. Good trees bring forth good fruits; bad trees, bad fruits. The reverse we do not find, where a good source yields a bad product or a bad source a good product. Consistency in the natural world permits its study with expectation of order. By examining its output or its work, we tell if a tree is a good one or not. This law of physical nature may figuratively illustrate the connection between character and conduct. Human beings are judged by their works; being and doing are logically related.

To the discernment of false prophets one may apply this principle. False prophets may appear outwardly as sheep but actually be ferocious wolves; their behavior reveals their character. In nature where the two animal types are clearly distinguished, such confusion seems unlikely to occur. But in this illustration, biogeographical nature is more pliant. Matthew has another similar text (12:33), while Luke has one (6:43-44) with a different grouping of plants. Both animals and plants are used in the sermon passage to exemplify the idea of like from like (Davies and Allison 1988:704-09; Fitzmyer 1981:643).

Later Jesus compares wise and foolish builders (Matthew 7:24-27). The former hear his words and live by them (including those accounts with geographical settings), while the latter hear but fail to heed. The wise one builds his house on a rock (or the rock). Even when the climate changes so that the rains descend, the streams rise and the winds blow, the house does not fall because its foundation is on the rock. But the foolish one builds on the sand, perhaps in the stream bed. When the same elements beat against this house, they are strong enough to dislodge the structure; it falls and with a great fall. Apparently during the dry summer, the sandy site seems appealing; but the winter rains fill the wady and assail the building. Then it is seen that the rock on higher ground is a better site.

In Luke's parallel account (6:47-49), the details are different. The wise builder digs deep and lays the foundation on the rock. When the nearby river overflows its banks and floods the area, the house is not shaken because of the nature of the foundation. But instead of laying a foundation, the foolish builder builds on the surface, on the earth. The torrent from the flood has an easier time; the house collapses with great destruction. Again there seems to be no middle ground; either the house remains intact or it is completely ruined (Davies and Allison 1988:722; Fitzmyer 1981:644; Thompson 1972:119).

In the third beatitude (Matthew 5:5) the meek are blessed, for they will inherit the earth. Probably the whole earth rather than the land of Israel is intended in this eschatological reversal. The meek inherit the kingdom, which has spiritual meaning and is separated from geography. The humble receive a place in a kingdom transcending human earthly kingdoms (Beare 1981:130; Davies and Allison 1988:450-51).

Next we discuss three texts in the sermon which mention both heaven and earth explicitly. In 5:17-18 Jesus says that he has not come to destroy the law or the prophets but rather to fulfill them -- to bring out the internal and underlying principles, to go beyond superficial appearances. Then, as in the Olivet discourse passage, he indicates that heaven and earth will pass away. Furthermore, even though the law endures for a long time, it seems not to be eternal either. At least in the form that we know them, the geographical features are temporally limited. A similar remark occurs in Luke 16:17 (Davies and Allison 1988:490-91).

The second text (5:33-37) discusses the taking of oaths. While in the Old Testament one was commanded to keep one's oaths, Jesus says that we should not swear at all. We should not do it by heaven, earth or the city of Jerusalem (since they are, respectively, God's throne, his footstool, and the city of the great king). Not inherently valuable

are these geographical realities but only in relation to their creator and sustainer (Davies and Allison 1988:536-37; Beare 1981:156).

The third text (6:19-21) says that true treasures are not on the earth but instead in heaven. Destruction of earthly treasures may occur through nature (moth and rust or possibly another insect) or from thieves (Davies and Allison 1988:629-31).

A few additional texts are cited to show the global dimension of the thought world of the New Testament. The day of the return of the Son of Man comes with judgment; it is universal, upon all who dwell on the face of the earth (Luke 21:35) or upon the inhabited earth (21:26), where humans settle and occupy. Before the end comes, the gospel of the kingdom is proclaimed to all the inhabited earth, to all nations (Matthew 24:14). As he delivers the commission to his disciples after his resurrection (Matthew 28:18), Jesus declares that all authority has been given to him in heaven and on earth (Danker 1988:339; Fitzmyer 1985:1349, 1355; Davies and Allison 1977:343-44; Beare 1981:543).

In this section we have looked at a few parts of the sermon on the mount, including some referring to the heaven and the earth. Continuing that theme, we noted a few other texts with worldwide implications.

## **Conclusion**

In this initial chapter of the body of the dissertation, we have discussed geography as it is found in the first three books of the New Testament, the synoptic gospels. Primarily we have looked not at the geography of the world of the New Testament, in which world its events and thought processes occur (although we have provided some of this context), but rather at the description as found in the New Testament of the land and its human occupancy. Our major focus is the geography as set forth in the text of the document, while not neglecting explanatory material external to the text as necessary for clarity. We are not addressing features within physical or human geography which are not mentioned in the text. Thus we have not considered such features as oceans, glaciers, extensive mountain ranges, extreme tropical heat or polar cold, canals, dams, non-Mediterranean agricultural and urban types, and modern metropolises. Within the restricted region of Palestine, however, one finds a surprising diversity -- especially within physical geography.

Of note at the outset is how much geography we have found in a document acknowledged to be religious and concerned with eternal issues. Not mainly abstract philosophy or theology but rather principles embedded in physical life and human culture have we discovered in the life and words of the chief historical figure of the faith.



Yet we have also frequently found that this geography takes us out of the everyday historical world of our experience. By their frequent appearances in the synoptic accounts, the geographical features help to convey the message of the New Testament about the Kingdom of God.

Let us review our findings in this chapter. Largely from physical geography came the first examples. Mountains may be sites of escape for safety and of discourse with the deity. If one has a faith of thorough conviction, one may successfully call for a mountain to be cast into the sea. In contrast, in times of eschatological distress, people may call for mountains to fall on them. (Eschatology is the study of last things, events occurring at the end of the age.) But in the same setting, it may also be wise to flee to the mountains, where protection from danger is more likely. Three of his disciples see Jesus transfigured on a mountain, where Moses and Elijah also appear with them. Both in salvation history and in mythology mountains have divine associations. In these few references the geographical feature of the mountain, often a prominent and awesome sight especially for those accustomed to lower elevations or flat terrain, plays several roles of symbolic significance.

From Jesus' eschatological discourse on the Mount of Olives came the next set of passages. Among the signs of the end are earthquakes in various places, which have

implications for plant, animal, and human occupants of the earth. (By an earthquake the natural world also witnesses to the death of the messiah. Between noon and three P.M., normally a period of brightness, there is darkness over the land. These phenomena may indicate divine judgment or the sympathy of nature with an event of cosmic implications.) Other prophesied signs include disturbances for sun, moon, and stars. Heaven and earth we expect to pass away (Davies and Allison 1997:622).

Attention then centered on meteorology within physical geography. God sends rain and sunshine to both good and evil persons. From such natural processes we may infer something about the character of God. The meaning in geographical events here exceeds that of a physical or even a cultural analysis. Jesus cites weather phenomena to indicate to his listeners that they fail to understand the critical times in which they are living. Two incidents with common features we described next. In the first, the teacher shows control over the forces of a raging storm a control worthy of the architect of nature. In the second, he walks on the water as does one of his disciples briefly before doubting.

Several plant and animal types are included in New Testament passages to bring in the biological or living part of the physical world. Various herbs are used in discussion with religious leaders. The tiny mustard seed has symbolic

meaning for faith and for the nature of the kingdom of God. Other religious lessons come in treatments of the fig tree and flowers of the field.

Among the birds receiving God's care are ravens and sparrows; how much more should humans expect it. Both innocent as doves and prudent as snakes should believers be. The austere lifestyle of John the Baptist includes a diet of locusts and wild honey. A great fish of unknown identity serves in a sign given to Jesus' hearers. The traits of fox and donkey also figure in synoptic narratives. The dog in former times often contrasted with the domestic kind known today. It is grouped with the swine in one text, indicating its undesirable qualities. After receiving his share of the inheritance, the prodigal son squanders his wealth in a distant country and is reduced to the job of a swineherd. Despite the debased state to which he descends, his father compassionately greets him when he returns with repentance. Even our worst sins the father in heaven analogously is ready to forgive. In two memorable instances Jesus uses the camel to illustrate his message. In one case the dangers of wealth are in view, in the other the failure to discriminate between greater and lesser matters.

After presenting this extensive collection of references from physical geography, we presented others from human geography. The first ones concerned grain agriculture. In the parable of the sower, different soil conditions are

symbolic of different levels of responsiveness to the gospel. The parable of the wheat and the tares concerns the time of the end, as shown in Jesus' allegorical and interpretation. The grape or the fruit of the vine is also a major crop in the area. One parable concerning a vineyard shows God's unexpected generosity; another symbolically treats the rejection of the prophets and the messiah. Livestock also enter into the gospel record -- e.g., in the judgment scene, in which humanity is represented by sheep and goats. Concern by God for the environment the text also illustrates.

Several occupations in addition to agriculture we also mentioned. Four of the twelve disciples are fishermen; one, a toll collector. Other occupations include merchant, manager, soldier, and carpenter.

Urban geography we also treated -- notably for towns in Galilee. Some of them Jesus denounces for their failure to respond to his works.

Then several passages from the sermon on the mount we considered. One knows whether trees are good or bad by their fruits. Jesus contrasts wise and foolish builders and indicates connections between heaven and earth. A few other passages show that the synoptic Jesus has a global perspective, with attention to all the inhabited earth.

Both in quantity and variety, the geographically relevant material in the synoptics is striking. While many

(probably most) of the geographical features play a non-geographical role, some may not. Although the herbs are used in a teaching context, they seem not to have symbolic meaning. Likewise the sycamore fig tree of Luke 19 has a physical significance; but the sycamine tree of Luke 17 is more symbolic, yet with literal grounding. While the reference to toll collector in the call of Matthew is mainly literal, the passage about fishermen in the call of four of the disciples has symbolic application. The text about locusts is literal; yet some of the other animals are treated with rich symbolic meaning -- e.g., sheep, swine, dog, and camel. Good examples of passages with significant literal meaning and with extended didactic application are two on the weather (Matthew 16; Luke 12). In the parables of the sower and of the wheat and the tares, a literal foundation receives allegorical interpretation. In the comparison of wise and foolish builders, the geographical features also act to meet literal expectations; but in addition, the account illustrates a principle surpassing the physical level. References to mountains and earthquakes too extend past the traditionally geographic.

Although many passages have been cited from these three gospels, quite a few more might have been added for both nature or the land and its human occupancy. To do so, however, would not seem to change the basic conclusion of the chapter.

As indicated throughout the chapter, literal geographical meaning is still important in the synoptics; horizontal relationships on the earth are fundamental in the text. Yet we also find recurrent transgeographic symbolism. We consider the possibility of a teleology (design or purpose) in creation, so that geographical features might have instructive value for residents of the world. Under the control of their creator, those created features have no independent existence. Temporary (heaven and earth are to pass away, Matthew 24:35) and contingent by nature, they point to a greater underlying reality.

## CHAPTER 3

### GEOGRAPHY IN THE GOSPEL AND THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

#### Introduction

We now consider geography as described in the New Testament for the second class of books -- the gospel and the epistles of John. While the gospel is the fourth book in the canon, the three epistles are near its end. Both similarities and differences do we find between the gospel of John and the three synoptic gospels. All four books include the work of John the Baptist, Jesus' interactions with disciples and religious leaders, and some events of his life -- especially the final entry into Jerusalem, the crucifixion, and the resurrection. One difference is in the style of Jesus' language. In the synoptics his sayings are relatively brief, and he frequently teaches with parables. In John he uses longer discourses, sometimes with expansions on theological themes. A second difference concerns content. In the synoptics the Kingdom of God is at the center of Jesus' message; in John he speaks more about his person, his relationship with the Father, and life (or eternal life). Another difference is geographical. While in the synoptics Jesus' ministry occurs mostly in Galilee with only one trip to Jerusalem, in John he moves more frequently between the two areas. In John he is in

Jerusalem for some of the agriculturally-based festivals described in the Old Testament (Culpepper 1998:18-26).

The traditional author of the gospel and the three epistles is the apostle John, although many scholars would disagree. The dates of composition are not known with certainty. In the gospel Jesus changes water into wine at Cana in Galilee and cleanses the temple early in his ministry, rather than late as in the synoptics. He declares himself to be the bread of life, the light of the world, and the way and the truth and the life. He washes the feet of the disciples and speaks at length just before his death -- promising the Holy Spirit and praying for himself, his disciples, and future believers. He tells Pilate that his kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36). After this resurrection, he appears to his disciples; Thomas doubts at the first but then believes.

Not only does this chapter cover less material than the last one, but also the number of geographical references is proportionately less. Toward the abstract do the extended monologues of Jesus tend; the geography found in them and in the other parts of the book seems less earthy or literal and more intricately symbolic. Thus we expect to have fewer examples on which to base our geographical conclusions; yet the nature of what we find is scarcely less important than how much we find.



After examination of the contents of the three epistles of John (one containing five chapters and the other two only one brief chapter each), we have decided that they lack any distinctly geographical material. Thus this chapter includes discussion only of passages from the gospel of John.

As with the synoptics, we address first those references primarily physical in geographical content and then those primarily human. In addition, we attempt to follow within the two major categories (the land and its human occupancy) an order roughly similar to the order in the previous chapter.

### **Physical Geography**

#### **Mountains**

On one occasion in his ministry, Jesus decides to leave Judea and return to Galilee (John 4:3). Rather than taking a detour, he passes directly through the intervening territory of Samaria. The Samaritans were descendants of two groups: the remnant of those Israelites not deported by the Assyrians at the conquest of the northern kingdom and foreign colonists brought in from Babylon and other areas to replace the exiles. Between this mixed population and the remaining Israelite or Jewish population an intense hostility developed. When Jesus arrives at a well (known as Jacob's well), he violates Jewish custom by asking a woman there to give him a drink from the well. To do so would be

to risk acquiring a status of ritual impurity -- both from the woman and the drinking vessel. Accordingly the woman is astonished; a dialogue featuring ironic overtones ensues (Brown 1966:170; Barrett 1978:232).

Later in the conversation the woman decides that the visitor appears to be a prophet, perhaps one like Moses as mentioned in Deuteronomy. The Samaritans accepted as canonical only the Pentateuch and not the prophetic section of the Old Testament. She proceeds to raise a major issue disputed between the Jewish and Samaritan communities -- namely, the proper location for the worship of God. While the Jews believed it to be at Jerusalem, the Samaritan version of the Pentateuch supports Mount Gerizim (near Shechem in Samaria) as the chosen site. Thus the woman confronts Jesus with the discrepant traditions: our fathers worshiped on this mountain (Gerizim), she says, but you (plural, the Jews) say that Jerusalem is correct. For a Jewish prophet this would be a pointed remark to handle.

Jesus' answer (4:21) cuts through the controversy without directly pronouncing for the claims of either party. The time is coming when you (the Samaritans) will worship God (in particular, God as Father) neither on Gerizim nor in Jerusalem (on Mount Zion). Rather a new age is dawning in which neither place nor space are that important; where we worship means less than how we do so. While his declaration is not completely new, it seems to be a striking approach to

this topic of division between two major ethnic groups of his day. He goes on to say, however, that salvation is from the Jews -- that from the descendants of Judah would come the deliverer or savior (Bruce 1983:108-11; Barrett 1978:236-39).

In fact, not only is this transformation coming at a later time; it is already here. True worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth (4:23). The blessings of the world to come are available in part at this time. An eschatological tension regarding worship similar to that regarding the Kingdom of God in the synoptics appears here in John; the reality is both present and future. Because God is spirit (4:24), true worship must be consonant with his nature; thus the place of worship is unimportant (Brown 1966:171-72, 180).

In this passage we have an implicit commentary on the significance of geography. While both mountains are still important as geographical features, they become relatively less important because of the distinction between the earthly and the heavenly -- between what is from below and what is from above. Institutions limited in space and time are to be replaced; something else comes in their place. We still live in a geographical world, but another world different from this one has now begun to appear.

## Water

In the previous chapter the ministry of John the Baptist entered the discussion. In the fourth gospel Jesus and his disciples go to Judea, where they also engage in baptism (3:23,26). The actual work is done by the disciples although Jesus authorizes it. At Aenon near Salim John also is baptizing. Three possible sites for the area have been proposed. One is east of the Jordan, where John was active. A second is on the west bank of the Jordan about eight miles south of Bethshan. The third is in Samaria near Shechem. In any case water is plentiful in the location, important for the work which John is doing. It appears to be naturally occurring water -- possibly spring water, as the name Aenon suggests. We are not to envision a baptismal tank, as in later usage. Thus here a geographical feature is used for a symbolic act of major import (Barrett 1978:220; Brown 1966:151; Bruce 1983:93).

Earlier in the passage about Jesus' passage through Samaria, we noted that he asks the woman for a drink of water. He continues to say that if she knows who he is, she would ask him instead; and he would give her living water. She apparently thinks of fresh, flowing water in contrast to water from a cistern. Because the well is deep and he has nothing with which to draw out this water, she wonders where he may get it. Jacob, she notes, drank from the well -- as did his cattle; thus the supply of water may be substantial

though not inexhaustible. Yet those who drink this well water thirst again, Jesus says, but the one who drinks the living water does not thirst again.

The water which Jesus gives becomes a spring of water bubbling up or leaping up into eternal life. In the Old Testament living water metaphorically refers to divine activity. The people have forsaken Yahweh, the fountain of living waters (Jeremiah 2:13). In the last days living waters will flow out from Jerusalem (Zechariah 14:8). Everything will live where the river flows from the temple (Ezekiel 47:9). The water may represent the Spirit and/or Jesus' teaching. In either case it is a gift from the messiah, not something which humans obtain themselves through natural means. Neither spatial nor temporal restrictions apply to this water, which supplies inner needs permanently. A principle of the hidden spiritual life, it surpasses earthly existential bounds. It is mysterious and unfathomable -- unlike the well, which, though deep, is not an abyss. This bestowal from the world above points to the new age, in which the familiar world of geography below is renovated (Brown 1966:170-71, 178-79; Bruce 1983:103-06; Barrett 1978:233-35; Lindars 1981:182-83).

Though the geographical feature of water is also important in the west, in the waterless reaches of the east its value is more clearly evident. Precious and treasured is it in a hot, dry desert climate. In John 7:37-39 another

reference to living water occurs. The background for the passage is the feast of tabernacles, at which the people thanked God for the harvest of produce (fruit and grains) and also for the rain permitting crop growth. On the first seven days of the festival, a water-pouring ceremony was enacted at the altar. Parts from four trees (including willow and citron) the crowd carried in procession. On either the seventh or the eighth day, Jesus proclaims the availability of rivers of living water. Uncertain is it whether Jesus or the believer is the source of the water; but one possible view is that Jesus is the primary source and the believer a secondary one. Symbolically the water here refers to the Holy Spirit (Brown 1966:320-27; Bruce 1983:181-82; Barrett 1978:326-29; Culpepper 1998:140).

In both of these passages (John 4 and 7), water plays a distinctly symbolic role. Yet the water from natural sources serves in the symbolism. With the literal or physical grounding, the figurative implications have more credibility, with possibilities for extended application.

#### Miscellaneous

A few other texts under physical geography we now consider, some of which have parallels in the synoptics; we have discussed these in the previous chapter.

The incident in which Jesus walks on the water (John 6:16-21) is also included by John; he adds that the disciples have rowed about three or four miles when they see

Jesus, who bids them not to be afraid. The boat immediately reaches its destination (Bruce 1983:147-48; Brown 1966:251-54).

The feeding of the five thousand is unusual in that it is reported in all four gospels. While Mark notes that they sit on the green grass, John says that there is much grass in the place (6:10). Even as Jesus shows miraculous control over elemental matter and forces in the previous incident, so here he provides witness that he commands power of supernatural origins (Bruce 1983:144).

Early in the gospel record Philip, one of the disciples, finds Nathanael and directs him to come to see Jesus. As he approaches, Jesus calls him a true Israelite, in whom there is no guile, and says that he saw him under the fig tree (1:48). Amazed, Nathanael declares Jesus to be the Son of God and the king of Israel. Even this relatively minor display of supernatural ability is convicting for Nathanael. Sometimes rabbis studied under a fig tree. Sitting under a fig tree may also be a sign of peace and well-being. Perhaps no symbolic significance is intended (Brown 1966:83; Barrett 1978:185).

As in the synoptic accounts, Jesus sits on a donkey (a young donkey here, 12:14) for his triumphal entry at Jerusalem as a messenger of peace. However, the meaning of the event many (including his disciples) do not understand (Brown 1966:457-58; Barrett 1978:418-19).

The number of physical geographical references we see to be much fewer in the gospel of John than in the three synoptics as a unit. Given the nature of Jesus' teaching in this gospel, this result is not surprising. Less earthy, less rooted in the physical world does this gospel seem. Symbolic applications are frequent, with more emphasis on the contrast between two worlds vertically separated. Yet the natural environment has not at all disappeared.

### **Human Geography**

#### **Agriculture**

Following his final instructions to the disciples and his last recorded lengthy prayer, Jesus crosses the Kidron valley (east of the city) with them to a garden spot (John 18:1). The Kidron stream flows in the winter or rainy season, while the bed is dry at other times. The term for garden indicates a plot of land, which may have flowers or vegetables and perhaps trees also. East of the valley rises the Mount of Olives, on the lower slopes of which may lie the garden. Mark and Matthew refer to a piece of land with the name of Gethsemane, meaning oil valley or oil press -- an appropriate name for a site on that mount. Thus the reference in John may be to Gethsemane. In the garden the betrayal by Judas takes place. Some have seen a parallel with the garden of Eden in Genesis 3, with a struggle between the devil's agent (Judas) and Jesus. Whether or not this analogy is intended, some type of symbolism is



possible. In this instance, apparently purely geographical references may not have only physical meaning; figurative applications are also possible. John also mentions a garden (19:41) where Jesus was crucified, buried and resurrected (Brown 1970:806-07; Bruce 1983:339).

After the feeding of the five thousand and Jesus' walk on the water, the people find him and request a sign or miracle to authenticate his mission (6:30). They refer to the manna which their fathers ate in the wilderness, perhaps implying that Jesus has not done a miracle of that magnitude. A popular expectation that God would send manna again in the messianic age may have been current at that time. Jesus says that the Father is giving from heaven the true bread, which is Jesus himself; I am the bread of life (Brown 1966:265-66; Bruce 1983:151-52).

Various attempts have been made to identify manna with natural phenomena. One hypothesis concerns lichens, but it seems to lack support. Another suggestion is that manna is an exudation from small, scaly insects feeding on the tamarisk tree or other plants. The sweet liquid hardens quickly, falls to the ground, and is collected. However, the activity of the insects is seasonally limited. Additionally, while the Sinai desert has few tamarisks, the number of wanderers was large. The traditional supernatural explanation remains as perhaps the most natural one (Zohary 1982:142-43).

After the parts of Jesus' journey through Samaria that we have described earlier, he discusses the harvest with his disciples (4:35-38). On one explanation he says that normally harvest comes four months after sowing; however, the fields in this case are already ripe for harvest. In this metaphorical use of harvest for the gathering of a spiritual crop, both sower and reaper work together. The reference may be to the Samaritan mission or to the apostolic mission to the world. The sowers may be Jesus, John the Baptist or various figures from the Old Testament. To reap after others have sown is the privilege or responsibility of the disciples (Bruce 1983:114-15; Barrett 1978:241-43; Brown 1966:174, 181-84).

With the significance for economic (specifically, agricultural) geography is the narrative of the vine and the branches (15:1-8). In the Old Testament, the vine is used for the people of Israel. God brings it out of Egypt and plants it; it takes deep root and fills the land, but later enemies ravage it (Psalm 80:8-16). In the song of the vineyard (Isaiah 5:1-7), God plants a vineyard on a fertile hillside and adds a watchtower and a wine press. He looks for a crop of good grapes but instead receives bad ones. As a result, the vineyard is to be made a wasteland.

Jesus here is the true vine, the true Israel. God is the vinedresser or cultivator of the vine. The term is an ordinary one for farmer, although in English farmer would

not apply to working with the vine. The vinedresser tends the vine carefully, removing deadwood or branches bearing no fruit. When the productive branches are pruned of excessive wood, they may be even more productive (Barrett 1978:470-74; Lindars 1981:488-89).

Apart from the vine, the branches are without life and do not produce fruit. A separate branch by itself would be useless. The sap or juices of life from the central stock permit grapes to be produced. If the branch stays on the vine, it is able to bear much fruit; but a branch not remaining on the vine is discarded and withers. It is gathered with other branches, cast into the fire, and burned. What is evil or worthless is destroyed, although this action may benefit those remaining. The branches are the disciples, who must abide in Christ to receive life in the spirit; he also abides in them. This teaching of the mutual indwelling of Christ and the believer is near the heart of Christian faith and practice. Those who do not continue to grow and develop are those who do not remain on the vine or in Christ (Bruce 1983:308-09; Brown 1970:660-61,674-76).

This illustration has geographical foundations, with various geographical features specified or implied. Yet the meaning clearly overpasses the literal. While the geographical context permeates and gives form to the passage, the meaning is not at all primarily geographical.

The additional meaning, however, is realized through the geographical.

After discussing an agricultural passage about crops, we now turn to one about livestock -- the story of the shepherd and the sheep (10:1-21). The one who enters the sheepfold (where the sheep are kept) not through the gate but in some other way is a thief. By contrast the shepherd enters through the gate, which the gatekeeper opens for him. Continuing with details familiar to his audience, Jesus says that the shepherd calls his own sheep by name. They recognize his voice and follow him out of the fold; but since they do not recognize the voice of strangers, they do not follow them.

In the first five verses we may have two parables, the first focusing on the gate and the second on the relationship between the shepherd and the sheep. Explanations for each parable then follow. Jesus says that he is the gate for the sheep; those who enter through him shall be saved. Those who came before him are thieves -- perhaps including false messiahs and unworthy religious leaders of Israel. He is also the good shepherd, who lays down his life for the sheep. This willing attitude may reflect God's environmental concern for animals. The hired hand, who does not own the sheep, responds differently; when he sees a wolf coming, he abandons the flock and flees. While the intent of the thief is detrimental for the sheep,

even the hired hand is not fully committed to their welfare; his interests are more personally economic. But the good shepherd risks his life for them. One destroys and kills, another does not care, a third risks or lays down his life to save (Bruce 1983:223-28; Attfield 1991:29).

Old Testament background for the shepherd imagery includes Psalms 23 and 80, where God is the shepherd. Especially important for the Johannine passage is Ezekiel 34. The chief shepherd appointed other shepherds to care for the flock. But they cared more for themselves instead, so that the sheep were scattered. God will remove the unfaithful shepherds and become the shepherd himself. He will rescue the sheep from the nations, search for the lost, and bind up the injured.

Jesus also says that other sheep not of this fold he must bring also, evidently referring to the Gentile mission. They will hear his voice, so that there will be one flock and one shepherd (Brown 1966:385-87, 390-98).

With significant detail about a major agricultural activity in both ancient and modern worlds, this story can be read with economic and geographical meaning. Yet its figurative extension helps us to see natural and human features in a new way. But the geographical basis of the passage is important; an abstract presentation of principles would have less impact on the audience.

Near the end of the gospel after his resurrection, Jesus speaks with Peter (21:15-17). Variations in the Greek vocabulary may or may not be significant in interpreting the passage. Jesus appears to be reinstating Peter following his threefold denial before the crucifixion. Additionally, he gives Peter a threefold commission to feed or tend his lambs or sheep. The sheep or people of God are guided by shepherds or leaders, who are responsible to the chief shepherd; the sheep are his sheep. The metaphorical use of sheep in this gospel seems to inform about the tendencies of those called to the shepherd (Brown 1970:1102-06, 1110-17).

#### Occupations

After the resurrection and his appearances to the disciples indoors, Jesus appears again to some of the disciples at the Sea of Galilee (21:1-14). This event immediately precedes the Petrine commission. Peter initiates the idea of going to fish. They catch nothing during the night, but Jesus appears in the morning and briefly directs their efforts. When they net a large number (153) of fish, they recognize who he is. The number may be symbolic in some way regarding evangelistic efforts. One suggestion notes that 153 is the sum of all numbers from 1 to 17 (Barrett 1978:578-82; Brown 1970:1074-76).

John relates an incident early in Jesus' ministry (2:13-17) similar to one placed near its end in the synoptics -- the cleansing of the temple. Although there are differences

as well as similarities in the two accounts, some believe that Jesus took this action only once; others accept two separate events. He drives out those selling sheep and cattle and overturns the tables of the money changers. Apparently he is protesting the desecration of the temple and signifying its coming messianic purification (Brown 1966:115-25; Bruce 1983:74-75; Barrett 1978:197-98).

Again we find the material for human geography to be sparser in John than in the synoptics. It is important for us to note this contrast as we seek to obtain a fuller picture of New Testament geographical description. The texts in our document are the territory for our investigation. That there are fewer pertinent texts in John need not diminish their significance for our evaluation. The two prominent accounts about the vine and the sheep are striking for both literal and symbolic geography.

### **Conclusion**

Less geographical terminology have we found in the gospel of John than in the synoptic gospels. We found no texts at all to discuss in the three epistles of John. To find quantitative differences among various parts of our document is neither inherently encouraging nor discouraging. With a neutral perspective for inquiry, we search for the geographical content that is present -- whether it be much, some, little or none. The smaller amount in these books still contributes to our store of data.

A review of our studies for this chapter follows. Under physical geography we first looked at mountains and saw that which mountain we worship on is not especially important; how we worship means more than where we do so. Then followed a few passages on water. The first concerned the water of baptism. Two others had the common theme of living water, each with symbolic significance. In another passage, Jesus saw a new disciple under a fig tree. A few other texts had parallels in the synoptics.

The most important human geographical passages dealt with agriculture. One of them involved a garden where Jesus and the disciples went; another one, the harvest. The story of the vine and the branches taught lessons through geographical context; a similar remark applies to the story of the shepherd and the sheep. Two other texts related to other economic occupations.

Most of the passages were grounded in literal surroundings. Some seemed either to have no extension beyond the normally geographical or to be difficult to classify in this regard. Some were richly figurative; but without a geographical basis, much of the symbolism that we found would be empty.

Although several other texts of geographical value might have been cited, some of them were of doubtful relevance. Dominantly consequential for our study were the few major passages in both the physical and human categories.



Especially distinctive in this gospel is the vertical dimension of existence, the contrast between what is above and what is below. Jesus comes from the Father and then returns to him; he is only here for a short time. Though in the world, he is not of the world; the same applies to his disciples. It is this concept which underlies the presence of both literal and symbolic meanings for geographical features, not only in this gospel but elsewhere as well. The geography of the other world is both like and unlike the geography of this world.

## CHAPTER 4

### GEOGRAPHY IN ACTS

#### **Introduction**

Thus far in the first two chapters of the main body of the dissertation, we have described geography as found in the New Testament for its first four books, the four gospels. In this chapter we continue with the next book in sequence, Acts or the Acts of the Apostles, a history of the early church for about thirty years following the ministry of Jesus. Traditionally the author of the work is considered to be Luke, the author of the third gospel and the companion of Paul for some of his travels.

The words and acts of Jesus took place primarily in Palestine, concluding with his crucifixion and resurrection in Jerusalem. In Jerusalem the historical record of Acts begins, where it continues for the first seven chapters. It then moves to Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth (as specified by the summary statement in 1:8) -- including Caesarea, Antioch, Asia Minor, Greece, and Rome. The last sixteen chapters (13-28) deal with the work and ministry of Paul; his conversion is related in chapter nine.

Significant events in Acts include the selection of Matthias to replace Judas, the giving of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost with speaking in tongues, Peter's healing of the crippled man at the temple, the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira, the

conversions of Saul and Cornelius, and Paul's arrest, trial and imprisonment.

The narrative in Acts moves through many specific geographical locations in the eastern Mediterranean world. Not principally the details of the geography of these areas but rather the geography as it appears in the text is our concern. Yet as background for a better understanding of the travel narratives throughout the book, we are including a geography of Acts in Appendix C. It follows the order of the historical account and contains additional description about many cities on the route.

In the nature of its geography, Acts appears to resemble more closely the synoptics than it does the gospel of John. Both physical and human geographical references are abundant and varied. Much more territory is covered in Acts than in the gospels. The author also records a number of speeches, making it a little like the fourth gospel in that respect. Neither mainly abstract nor systematic is its theology.

We attempt to follow an order of treatment broadly similar to that found in the last two chapters. That is, we discuss references relating to physical geography first and then those relating to human geography. A third set on the world or the earth as a unit it seems best to treat separately. Before discussing the physical geography directly relating to the experiences from the first century

in Acts, we comment on some texts drawn from experiences in the Old Testament.

### **Geography from the Old Testament**

We refer briefly to two lengthy speeches in Acts since they contain geographical detail. Yet because that geography refers to the Old Testament period, it is not a primary concern in our consideration of the geography more directly relating to the progress of the book of Acts itself.

The speech of Stephen (Acts 7) begins with the call of Abraham to leave his homeland and to come to a new land, a land in which his descendants would be strangers. They were slaves in Egypt until God led them out under Moses at the Red Sea. Later Solomon built a house for God, even though he does not really dwell in such structures. After calling his audience to account for resistance to the Holy Spirit, Stephen is stoned with the approval of Saul.

Paul's message (Acts 13) in the synagogue of Pisidian Antioch refers to the exodus, the wandering, and the conquest. The period of the judges followed until the time of Samuel, when Saul became the first king. But he was removed and replaced by David, from whose descendants God brought a savior (Jesus) to Israel. Though rejected by those in Jerusalem, God confirmed his person and purpose by a resurrection and offers forgiveness and justification to any who believe, Jew or Gentile. But to those who scoff and refuse, judgment is impending.

## **Physical Geography**

### **Weather**

Paul and other prisoners are given to a centurion named Julius for the sea voyage to Rome (Acts 27:1-28:16). They sail in a coastal trading ship from Caesarea to Sidon. When they leave Sidon, they pass to the lee or east of Cyprus because the winds from the west-northwest in the early autumn are against them. They continue west between the northern coast of Cyprus and the southern coast of Asia Minor and reach Myra in the province of Lycia. Winds often blow offshore during the night and onshore during the day in this area at this time of year.

Ships carrying grain from Egypt to Italy often stopped at Myra. Julius finds a ship of Alexandria there and transfers Paul and the others to it. They sail west toward Cnidus at the southeast point of Asia Minor -- but slowly, due to the prevailing westerly winds. Apparently northerly winds begin to affect the voyage; once they clear the headland and lose the shelter of the mainland, they are unable to hold their course westward. Instead they move southwest toward Salmone on the northeast tip of Crete and continue south of the island in its shelter. Still with difficulty, they reach Fair Havens.

By this time the Day of Atonement has already past so that the period of dangerous sailing (September 14 to November 11) has begun. Between November 12 and March 12

normally navigation on the open seas was stopped. Paul advises that the voyage would be disastrous if undertaken, but his counsel is rejected. They reason that, because Fair Havens is unsuitable to winter in, they should attempt to sail to Phoenix (further west on the island), where the harbor would afford protection from the winter storms (Wilson 1997:243-47; Wallace and Williams 1998:20-25, 220).

A gentle south wind begins to blow, so that it appears that conditions may be favorable. But then after passing beyond the main headland of the southern Cretan coast, a tempestuous bora wind called the northeaster sweeps down from the island. A south-moving front over Crete may bring these forceful winds down a valley from the highest peak on the island (Mount Ida); wind speeds on the island's south side may be two or two and half times those on the north side. The ship is caught by the storm and is not able to head into the wind; thus the crew yields to it, and the ship is driven along -- passing south of the small island of Cauda. The sailors fear that they may run aground on the sandbars of Syrtis off the Libyan coast to the south. The ship is violently battered by the storm; the sailors begin to throw cargo overboard and then the tackle. Because the compass is not yet available and neither sun nor stars appear for many days while the tempest rages, they do not realize that they are moving westward rather than southward. They give up all hope of being saved.

Paul then stands up and addresses the group, saying that they ought to have heeded his advice and remained in Crete. Yet he assures them that God has revealed to him that there will be no loss of life, but that the ship will be destroyed; they will run aground on an island.

On the fourteenth night, they are still being driven in an area south of Greece and Italy. At about midnight, the sailors sense that they are nearing land and begin to take soundings to determine the depth of the water. Finding that they are close to land, they fear running on the rocks; thus they drop four anchors from the stern and pray for daylight. Since they have gone without food into the fourteenth day, Paul urges them to take some. When they have done so, they lighten the ship by casting the grain into the sea (Lydolph 1985:140-43; Hayward 1982:664-65).

When daylight arrives, they do not recognize the land; but they see a bay with a beach and decide to bring the ship to land there. They cut loose the anchors and head for the beach; but movement is arrested, perhaps by a shoal. The ship is run aground, the bow sticks fast and is immovable, and the stern is broken up by the surf. Some swim to land; others use planks or pieces of the ship. All 276 persons on board reach land safely.

They discover that the land is the island of Malta. The time is perhaps late October or early or middle November. The islanders show unusual kindness to the group, welcoming

them and building a fire because of the rain and cold. In another ship of Alexandria which was wintered in the island, they leave after three months. A south wind aids the last part of the trip from Rhegium to Puteoli, which was the main port in Italy for overseas shipping at that time of year. Soon thereafter Paul arrives in Rome. (Conzelmann 1987:215-21; Krodel 1986:469-79).

This story of the sea voyage on the Mediterranean is permeated with geographical, meteorological, and nautical detail. The journey itself and the safe conclusion with recovery from the shipwreck are part of the will of God for Paul to testify at Rome. Thus the adventure is embedded in the divine plan, as are the other narratives in Acts. Yet the geographical features are not treated figuratively or symbolically as they are in a number of passages that we have discussed from the four gospels. Although the maritime journey is history with a supernatural purpose, the geography is not obliterated in the account; indeed it is prominent.

#### Biogeography

Because the number of references for plant and animal physical geography is small in Acts, we treat them under one heading. It is proper, however, not to slight these entries; each one should be considered individually for its contribution to the whole.



In three places (5:30, 10:30, and 13:29), the text mentions or alludes to the manner of the death of the Messiah: he was hanged on a tree, meaning that he was crucified. In this case the event did not occur on a living tree but rather on a derivative product. But one might see in this reference to a tree instead of a cross or a stake a solidarity of the creator with his creation. In Deuteronomy 21:22 a person guilty of a capital offense might be hanged on a tree. Joshua later hangs five kings on five trees (Joshua 10:26). Stark and gruesome is the image of a condemned criminal hanging on a tree in public view.

Perhaps due to the magnitude of the danger from the threat to his life and the importance of the prisoner, when Paul is transferred from Jerusalem to Caesarea, a large detachment accompanies him (Acts 23:23-24). It includes two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen and two hundred others (perhaps spearmen); Paul is also to be mounted. The soldiers go as far as Antipatris between the two cities during the night; on the next day they return to the barracks while the horsemen complete the trip with Paul (Krodel 1986:431-32).

When Paul and Barnabas first came to Lystra, they find a man who is crippled from birth, and has never walked (14:8-14). After he is miraculously healed, the crowd proclaims that the gods have come down in human form. Barnabas is called Zeus the chief Greek god, and Paul is called Hermes,

the messenger of the gods, because he is the chief speaker. The priest of Zeus, whose temple is nearby, brings oxen and is ready with the crowd to offer sacrifices to the apostles. When they hear of these desires, they tear their clothes and address the crowd in order to restrain them from sacrificing (Krodel 1986:256-58; Conzelmann 1987:110).

At the Jerusalem conference in Acts 15, the meaning of the Mosaic law for Gentile converts is discussed. Paul and Barnabas relate how the Gentiles are coming into the church through their ministry. How are Jewish and Gentile Christians to relate to one another? James, the brother of Jesus, delivers the decision of the conference. God is taking a people for himself from the Gentiles. We should not trouble those Gentiles who are turning to God. Circumcision is not be required, nor is the keeping of the entire law of Moses. Yet four stipulations are laid down for the Gentiles in the decree. They are to abstain from unchastity, from food sacrificed to idols, from things strangled, and from blood. All but the first relate to animals. They are not to eat meat which has come from sacrifices to idols or false gods. Animals might be killed by strangulation without draining the blood; such meat is not to be eaten. Blood in particular is forbidden; perhaps this refers to blood consumed apart from meat as well as to blood in meat. It is expected that observance of these

provisions by the Gentiles would help to build harmony with the Jews (Conzelmann 1987:116-18; Krodel 1986:279-85).

Another incident also concerns the Mosaic law and the place of Gentiles in the church. At Caesarea Cornelius, a Gentile centurion, in a vision is told to send men to Joppa to bring back Peter (Acts 10). While the men are on their journey, Peter has a vision also. He sees heaven opened and something like a great sheet descending; it contains all kinds of four-footed animals and reptiles and birds. A voice tells Peter to kill and eat, but he replies that he has never eaten anything common or unclean. The voice responds that he is not to call common what God has cleansed. The scene occurs three times; Peter is left puzzled about the meaning of the vision.

The men arrive from Caesarea and return there with Peter. He soon announces to Cornelius and others with him that God has showed him (Peter) that he should call no man (or human) common or unclean. This then is the interpretation of the vision. Later in Jerusalem when he is challenged by Jewish believers (11:1-18), he recounts his experience and affirms that God has clearly indicated that he is offering salvation not only to Jews but also to Gentiles. Two visions occur in the account; for Cornelius the meaning is literal, while for Peter it is allegorical (Krodel 1986:187-94; Conzelmann 1987:80-82).

Predominantly thus far in Acts, the geographical references have been physical or literal. In contrast to many of the passages in the gospels, very little figurative geography has appeared -- although we have now seen in the biogeographical section two examples of symbolism, in the first and last cases that we considered (the tree and the vision of animals). Perhaps the general trend of geographical meaning in Acts helps to render the events and words less mysterious and more accessible. Though the divine presence is continuous in the narrative, we are in a recognizably geographical world. It may be that the text's view of the role of geography is not the same in each part of our document.

### **Human Geography**

#### **Occupations**

Several occupations figure in the narrative of Acts, including some that we have not seen before. While Peter is in Joppa, a disciple named Tabitha becomes sick and dies. She has shown concern for the poor and has made tunics and other garments, which are shown to Peter (9:39). Through divine intervention and the prayer of Peter, her life is restored; thus she may be able to continue her work of service.

Also while in Joppa, Peter lodges with Simon a tanner, in whose house he has the vision described earlier. Because of the nature of his work, a tanner was avoided by some who

were concerned about ritual impurity. That Peter stays with such a person may indicate that already before the incident with Cornelius, he is being prepared for ideas rejected by many of his people. Still Simon is Jewish, however (Krodel 1986:185; Conzelmann 1987:77).

In Philippi there seem to have been few Jews and thus no synagogue. Paul goes outside the city and finds a place of prayer (16:13-14), where he meets a woman named Lydia, who is a dealer in purple cloth. The luxurious purple dye was obtained from a shellfish of the genus *Murex*. But it was expensive, so that it was generally associated with royalty. The rich man in Luke's parable is clothed in purple and fine linen (Luke 16:19). It may be indicative of the status of women that Lydia is mentioned in the context of business and without reference to husband or male relative (Krodel 1986:306; Wallace and Williams 1998:61-62; Moller-Christensen and Jorgensen 1965:268-71; Wilson 1997:138-39).

When Paul arrives in Corinth (Acts 18:1), he meets Aquila and his wife Priscilla, who are tentmakers and recent arrivals from Italy. Because Paul is also a tentmaker, making tents from leather, he stays and works with them. Rather than being supported by his converts there, it appears that he spends much of the week engaged in manual labor. He thus sets an example of contributing and is not burdening others. This pattern of living may have helped to make others more responsive to his message of the Christian

gospel (Wilson 1997:163-64; Krodel 1986:342-43; Conzelmann 1987:151).

In his address to the elders at Ephesus (20:33-35), Paul comments on the practice just described. He has not coveted the silver, gold or clothing of others. Instead he has forgone his right for ministerial support and used his hands to meet his needs. By toiling in this way, one may help the weak. He then quotes words of Jesus not found in the gospels, that it is more blessed to give than to receive (Conzelmann 1987:176; Krodel 1986:391-92).

Soldiers are mentioned in Acts in various places. We have met two centurions, Julius and Cornelius. Soldiers are on the ship to Rome and accompany Paul on his transfer to Caesarea. The commander or tribune Claudius Lysias is in charge of about 1000 troops stationed in the fortress of Antonia, which was at the northwest corner of the temple area. When Paul is under house arrest in Rome (28:16), he is guarded by a soldier -- perhaps chained to him (Krodel 1986:408; Conzelmann 1987:183).

On another occasion in Philippi as Paul and others with him go to the place for prayer, a slave girl with a spirit of divination meets them (16:16-22). This is a spirit of Python, through which she brings much gain to her owners by soothsaying or fortune-telling. For many days, she follows Paul and the others and proclaims that they are servants of the Most High God. While the statement is true, the demonic

source in its manner is annoying; thus Paul turns and commands the spirit to come out of the girl. When the owners realize that their hope of gain is gone, they drag Paul and Silas before the magistrates. They are severely beaten and thrown in prison but are later released (Conzelmann 1987:131; Krodel 1986:307-09).

A similar incident occurs in Ephesus -- where religious, political, and economic interests seem to be involved. Demetrius, a silversmith, makes silver shrines of the goddess Artemis (19:23-27) and fears that his lucrative business may be in danger. This is because Paul has convinced many in Ephesus and throughout the province of Asia that gods made with hands are not gods. Demetrius voices his concerns to workmen in related trades, asserting that the temple of Artemis may be discredited and that the goddess may lose her majesty. Soon the whole city is in an uproar. After a period of confusion, the city clerk is able to quiet the crowd. Paul's life is protected, and he leaves safely (Conzelmann 1987:164-64; Krodel 1986:365-70; Wilson 1997:185-86).

We have described a variety of occupations, for both believers and nonbelievers. Especially noteworthy is the nature of Paul's ministry. Rather than taking advantage of his position, his sacrificial conduct is exemplary for other church leaders. We also have seen that the success of the message of the gospel may provoke opposition.

## Urban and Settlement Geography

Paul visited many cities on his missionary journeys. In this section the primary concern is with a few residences or houses which play a role in the history in Acts. We also discuss a few texts which reflect practices of the early Christian community in Jerusalem.

At one time Herod Agrippa I arrests some members of the church. He puts to death James the brother of John, two disciples mentioned previously. He also takes Peter and puts him prison. Although he is closely guarded, he escapes on the night before he is to be brought out to the people. An angel appears, a light shines in the cell, his chains fall off, and he walks through a gate which opens by itself. Peter goes to the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, where many are gathered and are praying. At first they do not believe the report of the servant girl that he is outside. Then they open the door, and he tells them what has happened. The house is apparently known in the community; it may be the site of the last supper (Mark 14:15) and perhaps also the meeting place after the resurrection (Acts 1:13) and/or the house where the believers are sitting (2:2) when the Holy Spirit is poured out. This latter event on the day of Pentecost is associated with speaking in tongues and with the beginning



of the New Testament church (Krodel 1986:72, 217-21; Conzelmann 1987:93-95).

At Philippi Lydia responds to Paul's message; she is baptized and so also are the members of her household (16:14-15), which might include servants and slaves. She invites Paul and the one or ones with him to stay at her house. Later when Paul and Silas are in prison, a great earthquake occurs, the prison doors open, and the bonds of the prisoners come loose. The jailer is terrified but is led to believe the gospel. Not only to the jailer but to all the others in his house do they speak the word. He then brings them into the house and sets a meal before them. After their release from prison, Paul and Silas return to Lydia's house before leaving Philippi.

There are several other analogous references in Acts. The message to Cornelius is also to those in his house; they ask Peter to stay with them (10:48, 11:14). At Corinth when Paul leaves the synagogue, he goes to the house of Titius Justus (18:7). Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, and all his household believe on Christ (18:8). On his way to Jerusalem, Paul stays at the house of Philip the evangelist in Caesarea (21:8). When he arrives in Jerusalem, he stays with an early disciple from Cyprus named Manson (21:16). We see here the importance of the home and the family in the early church in two respects. Sometimes entire households are converted. Also brothers and sisters show hospitality

in opening their homes to missionaries. When Paul is a prisoner in Rome, he stays in a rented house and welcomes those who come to him as he preaches the kingdom of God and teaches about Jesus Christ (Krodel 1986:307, 313, 344, 402).

As a result of the coming of the Spirit and the sermon of Peter on the day of Pentecost, many believers are added to the church (2:41) in Jerusalem. Tightly knit is the new community; they devote themselves to the teaching of the apostles, the fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayer. Many wonders and signs are done by the apostles. The unity of the community is notably reflected in the sharing of goods. All believers are together and have all things in common. They sell their possessions and divide to all, according as anyone has need (2:42-47). Although these words convey a context of early Christian communism, this voluntary sharing of goods and of spiritual understanding is not equivalent to the major forms of communism practiced in the twentieth century. In Luke's gospel Jesus identifies with the poor (4:18; 6:20) and makes radical demands on his disciples (14:33; 18:22). Thus in the sharing of goods, Luke shows continuity between Jesus and the early church. In addition, he unites spirituality and social responsibility; those with the Spirit care for the material needs of other members.

There are no needy persons among them. Rather than claiming exclusive use of possessions, they have everything

in common. Owners of lands or houses sell them and bring the proceeds for distribution to the needy (4:32-37). Barnabas is cited as an example, as he sells a field and brings the money to the apostles. Because they bring only part of the proceeds from a sale and attempt to deceive, Ananias and Sapphira fall down and die (5:1-11). These texts are remarkably insightful into the urban social practices of the first converts living in Jerusalem (Conzelmann 1987:22-23, 36-38; Krodel 1986:92-95, 116-22).

### **The World**

For the last group of texts, we consider some which refer to the world or the earth as a whole. World and earth we use as approximate synonyms, the former more clearly including not only the land but also the water and the air. Not the local or the particular is in view but rather the larger dimensions of geography.

At the time of miracles of Spirit and language on Pentecost, there are in Jerusalem devout men from every nation under heaven (2:5). A list of nations includes a number at various distances from Jerusalem. The idea of a regathering of the scattered tribes of Israel may be indicated. Additionally, if the gospel is to go to all nations, provisions must be made for communication in understandable language (Krodel 1986:71-79).

In the synagogue at Thessalonica, Paul proclaims Jesus as the messiah and persuades some, both Jew and Gentile

(17:1-9). But other Jews incite a crowd, so that the city is in an uproar. They go to the house of Jason looking for Paul and Silas, who apparently are staying there. When they do not find them, they drag out Jason and other brothers before the magistrates and accuse the missionaries apparently of turning upside down or setting in confusion the inhabited or civilized world, apparently meaning the Roman Empire. It is alleged that they are acting against the decrees of Caesar and are saying that Jesus is another king. The city officials are able to defuse the tension. The incident shows perception by the opposition that the new faith has extensive spatial implications (Krodel 1986:318-20; Wilson 1997:148; Conzelmann 1987:134-35).

Before Felix, the spokesman Tertullus charges Paul with being a pestilent fellow -- a pest or a plague; infectious and dangerous is he to society (24:5-6). He also is judged to be an agitator or one who provokes sedition or rioting among all the Jews throughout the inhabited world. He is a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes; he even tried to profane the temple. In his speech, Tertullus indirectly confirms the magnitude of the effects of Paul's efforts (Krodel 1986:436-37; Conzelmann 1987:199).

In their words to the crowd at Lystra (14:14-18), Paul and Barnabas cry out that they are men of like nature with them, rather than gods. They refer to the living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all things in

them. In the past he has allowed all nations to walk in their own ways (including idolatry), from which things they are now to turn away. Although they knew not the true God, he left a witness of goodness in nature -- in giving rains from heaven and fruitful seasons. In all lands he attends to physical and emotional needs. In creation as well as in scripture, miracles, and the spoken word, God reveals himself (Conzelmann 1987:110-11; Krodel 1986:258-59).

In Athens (17:16-34) Paul reasons both in the synagogue and in the market place, where he meets some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers. In his speech to the Areopagus, he notes that the men of Athens are very religious. The unknown god referred to in an inscription on one of their altars he now proclaims to them. Citing words from Isaiah 42:5, he declares that God made the world and all things in it and is the Lord of heaven and earth. He neither lives in temples made by hands nor is he served by human hands; rather he gives to all life and breath and all things. He made every nation of humanity or all of humanity from one man or from one blood to dwell on the face of the earth. The allotted periods or times and the boundaries of their habitation he determines; both temporal and spatial limitations are under his control. Although the meaning is uncertain, it appears that God determines the history of each nation, guiding its growth and decline; or possibly, God sets the times for his actions in human history. The

boundaries could be either national or natural, such as those between land and sea.

Paul then continues to show, through two quotations from Greek poets, that in God we live and move and have our being and that we are his offspring. He rejects idolatry, calls for repentance, and affirms the judgment and the resurrection of the dead. His message has both points of contact and points of contrast with his audience and brings a mixed response (Conzelmann 1987:138-46; Wilson 1997:153-56; Wallace and Williams 1998:124-31; Krodel 1986:324-39).

In this section the global scope of the geographical field appears before us. The message of the new and yet also old religion reaches throughout the inhabited world -- threatening to some, redemptive to others. God has made all things, providing the subject matter for the study of geography. In both its physical and human subfields, he has directed its content.

### **Conclusion**

While the material for discussion in the previous two chapters came largely from the life of Jesus, in this chapter it came from the life of the early church. A connecting link between the sets of texts is that Luke is the traditional author of both the third gospel and the book of Acts. The story of the new faith was expressed spatially in terms of increasing or continuing outreach to new areas. Thus it is not surprising that Acts has a significant amount

of intrinsically geographical content. Most of the references are to sites in the eastern Mediterranean; thus we are only sampling the geographical potential of the planet. Nevertheless the area is many times larger than that found in the gospel accounts.

A review of the findings in the chapter is again in order. Although our concern in this work is not primarily with the background geographical detail of the areas discussed in Acts, it is helpful for our purpose to present some of it. Thus we outlined in Appendix C the spatial flow of the narrative with facts about some of the cities visited. We noted the work of Philip in Judea and the conversion of Saul (or Paul) on the road to Damascus. Acts records three missionary journeys and a journey to Rome for Paul. Each missionary journey begins from Antioch in Syria. The first one extends to Cyprus and parts of the province of Galatia. Before the second one begins, the important conference at Jerusalem adjudicates on matters regarding Gentile membership in the new community.

In that second journey, Paul goes back through Galatia and then into Europe in both Macedonia and Achaia. The third journey also takes place in Asia Minor and Greece with a return to Jerusalem. Following his arrest he sails for Rome, to which he attains despite interruption by a shipwreck. Significant cities on the journeys include Philippi, Thessalonica, Athens, Corinth, and Ephesus.

The first text under physical geography was the robust record of the struggle on the sea to reach Rome. Perhaps comparable to a minor maritime exploration, these verses are bathed in geography. Under biogeography, we saw the cross called a tree. In the Jerusalem decree, Gentile are to avoid food sacrificed to idols, the meat of strangled animals, and blood. In a vision, Peter learns not to consider any person common or unclean.

Occupying our attention first within human geography was the category of occupations. Peter stays with a tanner in Joppa. Soldiers appear several times. A silversmith in Ephesus is disturbed by some of Paul's statements. Paul himself works as a tentmaker. Looking briefly at settlements, we found that sometimes a whole household accepts the message and that hospitality facilitates the missionary effort. The early community in Jerusalem practices the sharing of goods.

Another collection of references allows consideration of the world as a unit. The spread of the gospel to new areas provokes sharp opposition from some who are alarmed at possible changes in society.

Noticeably different from the first and second chapters of the main body of the work is the spread between the literal and the symbolic for this third chapter. Even though divine direction of human activity pervades the narrative, little metaphorical geography seems detectable.



Rather than being blended, the physical and the figurative or spiritual appear to be separate though united. Although both appear in association, they retain their distinct identities.

While a few other texts might have been cited, they would be relatively minor ones. A few major passages carry much of the burden of geographical evidence for this part of our primary document, while a number of other references make worthy contributions.

Especially significant for this study among the texts from Acts are references to the whole world or the inhabited earth. We also saw a few of these in the synoptic gospels. To the whole civilized world the message of the Christian missionaries is going; this process is viewed as beneficial by some, as detrimental by others. At Thessalonica and at Paul's trial before Felix we observed this concept of the worldwide extent of evangelism. At Lystra and especially at Athens we noted the relation of the creator to the world. God made the world or the earth and everything in it; thus he is the author of physical geography. He made all of humankind to live on the face of the earth; thus he is the author of human geography. For human beings he also directs events in time and habitations in space. Thus God determines the nature and the subject matter of geography.

## CHAPTER 5

### GEOGRAPHY IN THE EPISTLES

#### Introduction

The texts for the first three chapters of the main body are mainly descriptive, being concerned with words and acts in history. The texts for this chapter are different in that they come from epistles or letters, correspondences from an individual to another individual or to a group of individuals. While the authors of the gospels and Acts include some reflective commentary on the history which they are reporting, they are not as removed from direct contact with the historical and geographical world as are the authors of the letters.

Of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament, we are covering eighteen of them in this chapter. Since we found no geography to include from the three Johannine epistles, one might say that this chapter discusses the geography from twenty-one books or more than three quarters of the total. Some of the epistles are short, however, so that the amount of text is much less than that fraction.

Although the material in them is considered to be of enduring value since they are included in the canon for the Christian church, they are sometimes called occasional documents in that they are written to deal with issues relating to specific historical occasions. While some topics seem to be more relevant to particular settings and

others to be more generally applicable, we may find throughout the epistolary corpus principles meaningful in many other contexts.

Paul is the traditional author of thirteen of the epistles; a few would also attribute Hebrews to him. Possible dates of composition range from about 48 to 70 A.D. The other seven (called the general epistles) are attributed to John (3), Peter (2), James (1), and Jude (1) -- the last two being half-brothers of Jesus; the dates of composition are uncertain. The subject matter is diverse and includes doctrinal or theological discussion, ethical or exhortative elaboration, and personal or emotional expression. Yet a unity in spirit and intention may be sensed.

Romans discusses the righteousness of God through the gospel, the failure of both Jews and Gentiles to live by the standards of the law, justification by faith, the struggle with sin, life in the Holy Spirit, the status of Israel, and the transformed life. First Corinthians deals with various issues in the church -- such as church discipline, divisions, food sacrificed to idols, marriage, and public worship; it also includes chapters on love and the resurrection. Second Corinthians is notable in revealing some of the personal struggles of Paul. Galatians discusses justification by faith and both the freedom and the responsibility of the Christian. In Philippians, Paul portrays Christ as a model of humility and refers to both

the peace of God and the God of peace. Eschatology, including the second coming of Christ, is prominent in the two Thessalonian letters. First and Second Timothy and Titus are addressed to church pastors.

James writes about trials, favoritism, faith and works, the tongue, wisdom, and faithful prayer. First Peter deals with salvation, the life of holiness, submission to authorities, the example of Christ, and unjust suffering. Second Peter covers Christian traits, false teachers, and the day of the Lord. The brief letter of Jude refers to Michael the archangel, Cain, Balaam, Korah, and Enoch and calls for faithful endurance.

A number of the epistles have little if any geography pertinent to this study. Yet there are a few passages of special significance. A small number of the epistles have most of the important geographical content.

While the variety of contexts in the documents may suggest a structure for this chapter different from those of the last three chapters, further consideration argues for a continuation of the previous format. Thus we first examine passages for physical geography, then those for human geography. A third set of passages has more explicit global potential and recalls texts from earlier chapters while adding new details.

## Physical Geography

### Weather

In the first passage from this large collection of letters, we have a transition from a major text in the previous chapter -- Paul's interrupted sea voyage to Rome. In Paul's first epistle to Timothy, he exhorts the younger man to maintain faith and a good conscience (1:19). Some, he goes on to say, have rejected the latter (conscience) and have thus sacrificed in shipwreck the former (faith). Although Paul recovered physically from his literal shipwreck, one who in the nautical image loses faith may not recover so easily.

Due to the presence of common material, it seems evident that the books of Jude and 2 Peter have some kind of literary relationship. One frequently held position is that the shorter letter (Jude) was written first and that the longer letter (2 Peter) borrowed from it. Two sets of related images, one from each book, are partly meteorological and are considered together here.

Both books were written at least in part to counteract the errors of false teachers. The set of four images in Jude 12-13 drawn from nature colorfully characterizes these purveyors of destructive doctrine. Firstly, they are clouds carried along by the wind, yet without water. The picture reflects summer conditions in the eastern Mediterranean, in which clouds overhead appear to promise rain but then pass

on without delivering it. Analogously, the false teachers make empty claims for the spiritual benefits of their words. Secondly, they are autumn trees bearing no fruit. The meaning appears to be similar to that of the first image: these trees one would expect to produce fruit, but they fail to do so. The trees are also described as uprooted; because they do not fulfill their purpose, they are removed.

Thirdly, the pseudo-teachers are wild waves of the sea, casting up the filth of their deeds as foam. The image may be from Isaiah 57:20, where the wicked are like the troubled sea, tossing up mire and dirt. Fourthly, they are wandering stars, possibly referring to the planets. Unlike the fixed stars, which observe the laws of God, the wandering stars seem to have turned from their assigned paths (Bauckham 1983:87-91; Kelly 1969:271-75).

Jude has used images from each of the four divisions of the created world: clouds (air), trees (earth), waves (water), and stars (heavens). In contrast to the normal lawful behavior of these phenomena, the false teachers as represented by the images reject the law.

Despite the similarities between 2 Peter and Jude, the false teachers combated in each case are apparently not the same. The passage in 2 Peter analogous to the one just discussed in Jude is shorter, containing an expansion of the first of the four images (2:17). The teachers are described as wells without water and as clouds driven by a storm.

Rather than satisfying the thirst of a traveler or farmer, a dry well or spring disappoints. Likewise a cloud dissipated by the wind fails to fulfill. The geographical imagery in these passages in both books informs about the value of the teachers more effectively than abstractions would (Bauckham 1983:274; Kelly 1969:344-45).

Rich in practical wisdom, the book of James also contains a modest amount of geographically pertinent material. Those who lack wisdom may ask it from God, who gives generously and ungrudgingly. Yet those who ask should do so without doubting if they expect to receive from God. One who doubts or wavers is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. Such instability in nature is like a double-minded man who is unsure of his direction or purpose (1:5-8). The Pauline letter of Ephesians has a similar figure; believers are exhorted not to be as infants, tossed about with every wind of doctrine (4:14). That is, they need to be alert concerning misleading teaching from crafty deceivers.

One of the towering figures of the Old Testament is the prophet Elijah, who stood for Yahweh and against the worship of Baal in his time. Yet James cites him as a man just like us and as an example of a righteous man whose prayer was powerful and effective (5:16-18). He prayed fervently that it would not rain; rain fell not on the earth for three and a half years. Then he prayed again, but for rain this time;

rain fell from the heavens, and the earth produced harvest (Dibelius 1976:256-57).

These several passages of meteorological relevance are predominantly figurative or metaphorical. The last text is more literal even though it illustrates a general principle. After finding mainly literal passages in the chapter on Acts, we now return more to the symbolic at the outset of this chapter. It may not be surprising to find this tendency in contexts instructive or corrective rather than historical.

### Biogeography

Since there is only a small amount of combined plant and animal biogeography, we are placing the material under one heading. Other biotic references are included under agriculture within human geography.

James discusses the rich man, advising humility for him because he will disappear or pass away as the flower of the field (1:10, 11). Vegetation as transitory is a figure found several times in the Old Testament -- e.g., Psalms 37:2; 90:5-6, 103:15. When the sun rises with a scorching heat, it withers the field; the beauty of the flower in it perishes. In this way also the rich man withers away as he goes about his business. Peter's first epistle has a similar passage (1:24). There not only the rich but all humans are as grass. In contrast to the withering and fading vegetation is the enduring word of God. Even lowly



and common plant life can instruct in a significant manner (Dibelius 1976:85-86).

In 1 Peter the devil or the adversary prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour (5:8). This image of an unseen enemy of great power, whose existence is denied by many, is striking. If he can remain hidden and undetected, he is all the more dangerous. Believers are urged to be alert and to resist through faith in God, who is a greater power (Kelly 1969:209-10).

Returning to the false teachers about whom Peter warns, he says that they follow the way of Balaam, who loved the wages of wrongdoing (2:15-16). Balaam was offered a reward by Balak to curse Israel (Numbers 22). But a donkey spoke with a human voice in helping to restrain the desires of the prophet. Normally speechless, this animal functioned effectively as a divine messenger (Kelly 1969:342-43).

Two other animals figure in the description of the false teachers (2 Peter 2:22), who once knew the right way but later rejected it. They are as a dog who turns back again to his own vomit; the new and better way does not appeal strongly enough to prevent their return to the old and inferior way. They are also as a sow which is washed and then goes back to wallowing in the mud. The teachings of these persons are viewed not merely as interesting options but as dangerous alternatives with heavy consequences.

In James 3 the author discusses the power of the tongue and the difficulty of controlling it. He warns his readers that not many of them should be teachers because they will be judged more strictly. Those who err not in speech are able to control the whole body (3:2). In support of that statement, we note that by putting bits in the mouths of horses we may guide the whole animal (3:3). About the rudder of a ship one may make a similar statement. Though the tongue has a high potential for good, it is frequently used for evil instead. It is a fire and corrupts the whole body, itself being set on fire by Gehenna (or hell). Although humans are able to tame every kind of animal, bird, reptile, and sea creature, no one is able to tame (subdue or restrain) the tongue (3:8) -- such a restless evil is it, full of death-bringing poison (Dibelius 1976:186).

James later discusses the rich again at length. He says that they ought to weep and wail over the miseries coming upon them. Their riches have rotted and their clothes have become eaten by moths (5:2). To the destructive work of the moth the Old Testament also refers (Hosea 5:12; Isaiah 50:9; Job 13:28). It is an appropriate figure for portraying the uncertainty of wealth (Moller-Christensen and Jorgensen 1965:223-25).

In his epistle to the Romans, Paul indicts humanity for its ungodliness and wickedness. Even God's eternal power and divine nature may be known from the physical creation;

thus humans are without excuse even if they do not have the witness of revelation. They have rejected him in their ingratitude and have exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for images resembling corruptible humans, birds, four-footed animals, and reptiles (Romans 1:23). The language recalls that of Psalm 106:20. In Deuteronomy 4:16-18, Moses warns against making images of various creatures. But apparently the temptations toward idolatry are not easily resisted (Cranfield 1975:119-20).

Most of the biogeographical texts are from the works of James and Peter. Some of the figures are memorable and colorful though; even a single well-placed reference may contribute significantly to a narrative. Two of them refer to the animal world as a whole or in large part as detailed in its components.

We have found little physical geography in this large collection of letters. Of what is there, very little has been from the Pauline corpus (which constitutes the bulk of the total), perhaps not surprising when we consider the subject matter of those writings. Whether the quantity of pertinent passages is large or small need not alter our general descriptive and evaluative task concerning the geography found in the New Testament.

## **Human Geography**

### **Agriculture**

In his lengthy first epistle to the Corinthians, Paul deals with a number of issues in the church. For example, the members were divided over their respect for various leaders. Paul shows that both he and Apollos are servants of God and ought not to be compared in human terms (1 Corinthians 3:5-9). Paul planted and then Apollos watered; apparently Paul arrived first, followed later by Apollos. But it was God who gave the increase or made the plants to grow. Neither the one who plants nor the one who waters has independent importance. Rather they work together for God with a common goal, each to be rewarded according to his labor. Those in the congregation, representing the field, ought not to prefer one minister over the other (Barrett 1968:84-86).

Later in the same letter Paul refers to the planting process in a different way. What we sow is not the body that will be, but rather a seed -- perhaps of wheat or of another grain. God then gives to each seed a body according to his will. Paul includes this discussion in his explanation of the nature of the resurrection of the body; the body sown is natural, the one raised is spiritual (15:37-44).

The author of Hebrews uses botanical imagery to illustrate the fate of those in the community who fall away

after accepting the gift of the Spirit (6:4-8). The blessing of God comes upon land which drinks in the rain often falling on it and which produces a crop useful to those for whom it is cultivated. But land which bears thorns and thistles is worthless; it is on the verge of being cursed, with its end in burning. Parallel ideas come from the narrative of the garden of Eden; land originally blessed later becomes cursed (Genesis 1:11-12; 3:17-18). Although one might consider the burning as a measure to clear the land of weeds, the cursing indicates the intention to be condemnation rather than discipline (Attridge 1989:172-73; Buchanan 1972:110). Apostates fall under divine judgment (Hebrews 10:30).

From a second Roman imprisonment some believe that Paul wrote his second epistle to Timothy. He cites three examples in encouraging dedication to the task of evangelism. Both a soldier and an athlete must be thoroughly committed to be successful. And the diligent farmer should receive the first share of the crops (2:3-6).

James continues his warning to the rich beyond what we noted earlier (5:3-6). They have withheld wages from those who have mowed their fields. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of both owner and laborer. The rich have lived in luxury and self-indulgence on the earth and have murdered the innocent.

To those condemned by the wealthy, James commends patience until the coming of the Lord (5:7-9). The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and latter rains. These rains come in the Palestinian rainy season. The author again calls for patience from those suffering affliction; the coming of the Lord is near. The judge is standing at the door (Dibelius 1976:238, 243-44).

In discussing the relations of Jews and Gentiles in the era of the new covenant, Paul uses an illustration from arboriculture (Romans 11:17-24). He pictures the Jews as a cultivated olive tree; some of its branches have been broken off, and a wild olive shoot (representing the Gentile Christian) has been grafted in among the other branches. Normally one grafts a cultivated shoot into a wild tree, but this may be an example which Paul recognized as being contrary to nature (11:24). He warns the Gentile not to become arrogant but rather to fear; for if God did not spare the natural branches, perhaps he will not spare him either. It is the root which supports the branches rather than the reverse. Furthermore, if the Jews do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in again; for God is able to return the natural branches to their own olive tree. Through an agricultural metaphor Paul is able to express himself more clearly on this matter of central significance (Cranfield 1979:565-72).

In showing how we misuse the tongue (3:9-12), James says that with it we bless God the Father while we curse humans, who are made in God's likeness. From the same mouth proceed both blessing and cursing. But this practice is contrary to what we see in nature; does a spring pour forth fresh and bitter water from the same opening? Can a fig tree yield olives or a grapevine figs? The agricultural analogies recall Jesus' words in the sermon on the mount. Natural examples may help us to guide our conduct (Dibelius 1976:203-06).

Thus far our agricultural material has been related to crops or plant life. Now we shift to consideration of livestock or animal life. The book of Hebrews contains substantial amounts of both exposition and exhortation, both of which are directed to believers, sometimes referred to as sheep. Jesus himself is the great shepherd of the sheep (13:20), as he oversees their lives and provides for their needs. The good shepherd is willing to give his life for the sheep; in this instance, the possibility was actualized. The God of peace yet also of principle permitted the bloody death of the messiah to secure a new covenant. For this model shepherd though, a return to life followed voluntary sacrificial death. In pastoral geography we do not expect this sequence of events (with a resurrection at the conclusion); yet the physical imagery is still symbolically significant.

Another shepherd (Moses) was faithful in the house of God (3:2), although he was not the great shepherd. It would seem unusual for actual sheep to rebel against the shepherd, although some stubbornness might occur. But these figurative sheep (humans) were unruly and did not follow the voice of the shepherd in the desert (3:8); the geographical strains of difficult climate, water shortages, and agricultural scarcity were too much for them. Over a period of forty years, they were frequently irritants.

Peter observes in his first epistle that we may wander or go astray and then return to the shepherd and guardian of our souls (2:25). As a fellow elder, he appeals to the elders to shepherd the flock of God under their care and to do so willingly. Rather than lording it over those entrusted to them, they should be examples in conduct. Then when the chief shepherd appears, they will receive the crown of glory which does not fade away (5:1-4).

At the end of Romans 8, Paul elaborates on the confidence which Christians may have even under persecution (8:31-39). In view of the magnitude of the sacrifice already accomplished for us, we should expect God to sustain us in present afflictions. Among other things neither tribulation nor famine nor sword is able to separate us from God. Paul quotes Psalm 44:22 as evidence of the threat of persecution: we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered. The text recalls Isaiah 53:7 -- where the servant,



identified with the messiah, is led as a lamb to the slaughter (Cranfield 1975:440-43).

Persecution also figures in the next text. Hebrews 11 lists many heroes of faith -- some by name and others anonymously. Some of them were victorious -- as they conquered kingdoms, shut the mouths of lions, and escaped the edge of the sword. Others were persecuted, tortured, mocked, and stoned. Some went about in skins of sheep and goats. Though they were afflicted by those in the world, the world was not worthy of them (11:32-38).

In 1 Corinthians 9 Paul expounds on his rights as an apostle. A soldier expects to be paid rather than to serve at his own expense. A vinedresser eats of the fruit of his labors. The shepherd of a flock should drink from the milk it produces. These arguments from common sense are also supported by a scriptural statement. Deuteronomy 25:4 says that one shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain; thus the animal may eat from the produce which it is working on. The words may be applied to show that laborers in the gospel have a right of support. Nevertheless Paul has set an example by not claiming this right. Rather he has offered the gospel free of charge (9:3-18). In 1 Timothy 5:18, the same verse from the Old Testament is used to show that elders of the church, especially those involved in preaching and teaching, deserve to be supported (Barrett 1968:204-07).

Paul finds the statement about oxen to apply to human welfare (9:10-11); what this implies about his environmental concern for animals is uncertain since his attention in the passage is on humans rather than animals. Yet he says that the creation itself (apparently non-human and human) will be liberated from its bondage to decay (Romans 8:21-22). In Colossians 1:20 all creation participates in the plan of salvation (Attfield 1983:375; Attfield 1991:30).

In the Old Testament the Levitical priesthood and sacrificial system provided the means of atonement for sin. The book of Leviticus describes the procedures in detail. Sacrificial types included the burnt offering, the peace offering, and the sin offering. To sacrifice an animal such as a bull or a sheep may indicate contrition and commitment on the part of a worshiper; but the blood of an animal cannot atone for sins (Hebrews 10:4). Such an action deals with external rather than internal realities. To deal adequately with human sin requires the sacrifice (once rather than repeatedly) of one who is at least human and, in fact, of one who is also divine. Thus not the blood of calves, bulls, and goats but rather that of the messiah is effective for spiritual purification (9:12-14). After receiving and reading the book of the covenant, Moses sprinkled the blood of sacrificial animals on the altar and the people (Exodus 24:4-8). The author of Hebrews refers to this event and to the ritual of the red heifer in stressing

the role of blood under the old covenant (9:18-22). The function of these valuable animals in the cult of ancient Israel should not be demeaned; yet another way was necessary (Buchanan 1972:148-49; Attridge 1989:248-49,257).

Quite a bit of agricultural terminology we have found to be woven into the text of the epistles -- from the field, the vineyard, the orchard, the pasture, and the altar. Some of the references are symbolic; others are literal, usually illustrating a point. These geographical extracts enrich the discussion and increase understanding, even at the theological level. The familiarity of the authors with this aspect of human geography is a notable asset.

#### Urban and Settlement Geography

In the early years of the church, members apparently often met in private homes, a few of which are mentioned in the epistles. Both Romans (16:3-5) and 1 Corinthians (16:19) mention a church in the house of Aquila and Priscilla. Paul's letter to the Colossians was also to be read at Laodicea, where possibly a church met in the house of Nymphas (Colossians 4:15-16). Philemon, the owner of the slave Onesimus, seems to have lived in or near Colosse; a church met in his house (Philemon 2). We may suppose that there were other house churches.

In Acts we observed a few examples of conversions of households; another one is mentioned in 1 Corinthians. Paul says that he baptized the members of the household of

Stephanas (1:16), who were the first converts in Achaia (16:15-16). In 2 Timothy Paul refers to the household of Onesiphorus (1:16-18; 16:19). When Onesiphorus was in Rome, he searched for Paul and found him, often refreshed him, and was not ashamed of his chains. Twice Paul wishes God to grant mercy to Onesiphorus, who served well in Ephesus.

Paul learns that there are divisions in the church at Corinth and that there have been abuses in the Lord's supper (11:17-22). Apparently the members brought food for a joint meal, but some ate too much while others went hungry. The lack of sharing may indicate barriers between rich and poor. Those who have more have houses in which to eat and drink on their own, but they ought not to show contempt for the church and humiliate those who have less (Barrett 1968:262-63).

Thus far our texts have been about literal houses or households; but in 1 Peter we find a symbolic usage. Christ was the stone rejected by human builders yet chosen by God. To him, a living stone, believers come; they are also as living stones and are being built into a spiritual house. Additionally they are a holy priesthood, one which offers spiritual sacrifice (2:4-7).

Ephesians contains a similar thought. Gentiles are no longer aliens but citizens with the saints and members of the household of God. The foundation of the house includes the apostles and prophets, with Christ as the cornerstone.

In him the whole building has its unity and rises to be a holy temple in the Lord. This temple or house has its background in the temple of the Old Testament. Believers are being built together in the messiah to be a dwelling in which God lives by his spirit (2:19-22). Geographers have supplied details about the variety of house types found in different parts of the world. It might be instructive to discover how some of those houses compare with this supernatural house.

The patriarch Abraham left his homeland at God's call even though he did not know his destination. While one may resist change regarding familiar places, one may also have a higher vision. One need not be limited by present geographical circumstances. Abraham stayed for a time in the promised land, as would a stranger in a foreign country. As did the next two patriarchs, Isaac and Jacob, he lived in tents, not settling down in a permanent residence. There are similarities between Abraham's journeys and the pilgrimages studied in human geography. In his case, however, he did not return to the departure site. Even though he was an alien in the land of promise (Hebrews 11:8-10), he had effectively renounced association with his previous geographical surroundings.

By the time of death, the patriarchs had still not received their inheritance. But even more significant than not becoming land owners in Canaan, they also had not

reached their true homeland. They confessed that they were aliens and strangers in the land and on the earth more generally. They might have attained their goal of a homeland by returning to their native land. But they were seeking another country; and the geography of this age did not satisfy them.

It was a better country that they desired -- in fact, a heavenly one (11:13-16). In contrast to their temporary dwellings in Canaan, they were looking for a city with foundations -- a city designed and constructed by the architect of the universe. Their promised new geography they saw only from a distance and welcomed what they saw. The recipients of the book of Hebrews also have a promise of a city to come, not having an enduring city now on the earth (13:14). In a related text, the author speaks of the age to come in 6:5. Thus concerning the city, the distinction from the present world is not only spatial (geographical) but also temporal (historical). The promise is also of the habitable world to come (2:5), with implications human and social as well as physical (Buchanan 1972:188-93; Attridge 1989:323-24, 329-31, 399).

The texts for human geography were especially prominent for agriculture. Yet the collection relating to the house was also helpful in showing a different domestic dimension. The city to come in the age to come may add to the subject matter for urban geography.

## **The World**

The discussion now moves to passages considering the world or the earth as a whole, with possible implications for geography as a whole. A reference may be horizontal and apply only or primarily to the world of our experience or it may be vertical with a distinction between a world or reality above and one below. Passages or ideas of these types we have seen in previous chapters.

In writing to believers in the capital city of the empire, Paul thanks God that their faith is being reported in all the world (Romans 1:8). Whether or not that faith is exceptional among Christians is uncertain (Cranfield 1975:74-75). Although the world may mean the Roman world or the known world rather than the entire planet, a statement with the latter meaning could be made in a world with corresponding transportation and communication facilities. Their obedience is also known to all (16:19). Paul has similar words for the Thessalonians; in every place their faith in God has become known (1 Thessalonians 1:8).

In a lengthy exposition of the work which God has done for Christians, the author of Ephesians states that he chose us in him (Christ) before the foundation of the world (1:4). The idea of the sovereignty of God, his election of his children, is prominent here. Some attempts to reconcile the omniscience or omnipotence of God with the free will of humans have been successful in varying degrees. It is the

geographical reference, however, which is significant for us.

Beginning now to look at some passages with the vertical feature, we notice that Paul encourages humility in the letter to the Philippians (2:1-4). Then he cites Christ's example as a model; he humbled himself in the incarnation when he came to the earth. Then following his death, he was exalted so that, at his name, all should bow -- all in heaven, on earth, and under the earth (2:5-11).

Since Christ has been resurrected and we are seated with him in heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6), we should set our minds on things above, not on things on the earth (Colossians 3:2). Thus the existence of upper and lower levels of existence is affirmed; the former is generally superior to the latter.

Further evidence for a realm above comes from 2 Peter. In authenticating the message which he proclaims, Peter refers to the transfiguration of Jesus, the account of which we saw in the chapter on the synoptics. Peter was on the mountain (on the earth) with James and John during the event (1:16-18), when he heard a voice from heaven designating the messiah as his beloved son (Kelly 1969:319-20).

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul asserts the teaching of justification by faith without the need for certain external works, especially circumcision. As part of his argument he gives an allegorical interpretation of the



Old Testament narratives of the births of Ishmael (4:21-31) (to Hagar, the slave woman) and Isaac (to Sarah, the free woman). The first was according to nature, the second through a promise; they represent two covenants. Paul identifies Hagar with Sinai (where the law was given), with bondage or slavery, and with the present city of Jerusalem. The antithesis is the Jerusalem above, which is free and the mother of us all. The idea here is of two Jerusalems, the lower or earthly and the upper or heavenly. In some traditions the temple and the city of Jerusalem are types or copies of the heavenly realities (Bruce 1982:216-23). We encountered a similar idea earlier in the city with foundations which God has prepared (Hebrews 11:10, 16). Today's geography may be modeled on and subordinate to a higher geography.

When the Israelites received the law at Mount Sinai, they were at a typical topographical feature; it could be touched and was burning with fire (Hebrews 12:18). Darkness and meteorological phenomena (thunder, lightning, and a thick cloud) were evident. Not silent either was the atmosphere -- with a trumpet blast and the spoken word. The people were terrified or trembling; the shepherd Moses was also afraid. Even animals were subject to death if they touched the mountain, on which Yahweh descended and which was wrapped in smoke (Exodus 19:16-19).

Yet this mountain is not the primary subject of the text in Hebrews; it is not the goal of the readers. But physical geography is not ignored; the graphic details given help to prepare us for the more symbolic texts to come. The focus for believers now redeemed is Mount Zion (Hebrews 12:22), which is linked with the city of the living God or the heavenly Jerusalem. Thus Mount Zion here apparently is not the physical city of David in the southeastern part of Jerusalem, nor is the heavenly Jerusalem the earthly city, whose origins are divine. Rather they are transcendent realities, whose precise nature or location either present or future is uncertain. But we are not limited to the geography of the world of today. Several other terms are mentioned in conjunction with the heavenly city -- including God the judge of all, the spirits of just persons made perfect, and Jesus the mediator of a new covenant. We seem to be in territory distinct from that of our earthly experience.

When the voice spoke on earth at Sinai, the earth shook (12:26). Another agitation is yet to occur, this time involving both heaven and earth, a shaking both foundational and eschatological. Not a renewal but rather a removal of those things which may be shaken seems to be indicated, a destruction of what is transitory. The things which are made or seen (11:3) are ephemeral and are passing away (1 Corinthians 7:31). Those which are not seen (Hebrews 11:1)

are enduring into the future. It is not that God is opposed to temporary things; they have a purpose, but it is part of their design to be changed or removed and replaced.

Not to the visible but to the invisible are we to look (2 Corinthians 4:18). The things which are not shaken but which remain may, in contrast to the material creation, be spiritual realities with more inherent stability -- including the priesthood of the shepherd and the eternal inheritance of the sheep. Unlike the unstable kingdoms of this age, as studied in political science, an unshakable kingdom is coming (Hebrews 12:28) -- a kingdom which will not be destroyed (Daniel 2:44). An enduring reality, perhaps both similar to and different from the earthly one known today to students of geography, is in store (Attridge 1989:374-76,380-1; Buchanan 1972:222-25).

In his second epistle, Peter says that in the last days scoffers will question the second coming, maintaining that all things are continuing as they have been since the beginning of creation (3:4). They seem to expect things to remain this way and to be skeptical about a judgment to come. In response, Peter points to the existence of the heavens long ago by the word of God and the formation of the earth out of water and by means of water. He may be referring to the creation account (Genesis 1:2, 6-10) in which God separates upper and lower waters and causes the dry land to appear. Through these waters the world of that

time perished in a deluge. Thus there is already a record of God's intervention in judgment, contrary to uniformitarian presuppositions.

The present heavens and earth by the same word are reserved for another judgment -- one not of water but of fire (2 Peter 3:5-7). The idea of a final world annihilation by fire has background in the Old Testament (Isaiah 34:4; Deuteronomy 32:22; Malachi 4:1) and in extracanonical writings. Other parallels come from Zoroastrian, Stoic, and Babylonian sources. Not only has geography been altered in the past, but we expect it to be altered again in the future.

With a roar will come the day of the Lord, in which the heavens will pass away (2 Peter 3:10). Also the elements will be destroyed or dissolved. The word translated by elements has several meanings, three of them seemingly possible here: 1. the basic elements of physical composition (earth, air, water, and fire in ancient thought or perhaps the chemical elements in current understanding). 2. the heavenly bodies (sun, moon, stars). 3. angelic powers or cosmic spirits. Some commentators favor the second option although the first is philosophically appealing. In addition, the earth and the works in it will meet a destiny uncertain due to variant textual readings. Apparently there are two main possibilities -- they will be (1) discovered, disclosed or found or (2) burned up. Whatever may be the

exact meaning of this clause, the ideas of destruction of the earth and the judgment of the wicked seem to be prominent in the passage. Though the day is certain to come and its consequences inescapable, its timing is unpredictable.

All the things just mentioned are to be dissolved or are being dissolved or are disintegrating (3:11). Possibly because the process has already begun, Peter's call for godly conduct has an extra urgency. Holy living by believers may hasten or advance the coming of the day of God; he is patient with humans so that they might come to repentance. Peter reiterates with elaboration that the heavens will be dissolved with fire and the elements melt in the heat (3:12). But this conflagration is not the end of everything; rather we wait for new heavens and a new earth (3:13), the home of righteousness (Kelly 1969:356-69; Bauckham 1983:300-01, 314-21, 324-26). Old Testament background for the change is found in Isaiah (65:17 and 66:22).

The several passages from the epistles concerning the earth as a unit have broad implications for geography. The gospel message has been spreading throughout the known world. Another world above may set a pattern for the form of the one below. Although some may believe that things have been and will remain largely as they are today, there

is evidence to refute those propositions. Apparent stability may be misleading.

### **Conclusion**

The extensive collection of New Testament epistles contains 121 chapters in its 21 books, slightly more than the 117 chapters of the gospels and Acts; yet the total text for the epistles is much smaller. They are not direct historical reports in the way that the other five books (covered in the last three chapters) are. Much of the geography in them is colorful and informative, and a few passages are quite significant. The Pauline epistles seem to be more abstract in their theological and ethical content than do the general epistles. Not surprisingly then, the latter group contains more of the total geography than we would expect from its size. If we consider Hebrews (whose actual authorship few scholars would accept as Pauline) along with the general group, the amount is very disproportionate.

Let us review some of the geography described or cited in these books. The first texts under physical geography were meteorological or proximate to such texts. As Paul was shipwrecked on his voyage to Rome, so one's faith may be shipwrecked. A set of images from Jude characterizes the false teachers, with references to each of the four parts of the geographical world. An abbreviated and modified form in 2 Peter shows how unfulfilling is the product of the

errorists. Considered to be a type of John the Baptist, Elijah prayed that it would not rain and later that it would rain; in both cases, the fervent prayers of this man, human as we are, were answered.

A number of insightful texts appeared for biogeography. The devil is compared to a roaring lion who is seeking his prey. A donkey spoke to the prophet Balaam, working with an angel to correct his way. The false teachers are as a sow which returns to the mire after being washed. How powerful is the human tongue for both good and evil; every sort of animal in nature can be tamed, but no one can tame the tongue. James severely warns the rich in their oppression of the poor; their wealth has rotted, and their clothes are moth-eaten. From the creation humans should be able to learn something about God; but many have dismissed that witness and made images of various animals.

Human geography was represented quite a few times by agricultural entries. Although one minister may plant and another may water, God grants the growth; members should focus on the source of all things and not show favoritism regarding servants in the church. The faithful are as land which produces a good crop, while the unfaithful are as land which produces thorns and thistles. Patiently the farmer waits for the former and latter rains to nourish his crop in the field. The Gentile Christian is as a wild olive shoot grafted into a cultivated olive tree, representing the Jews.

Some of the natural branches were broken off but may be grafted back in, referring to those Jews who turn from unbelief. The great shepherd of the sheep is a model for the other shepherds; they should care for the sheep unselfishly and not take advantage of them. As illustrated by the ox treading out the grain, ministers of the gospel have a right of support; but Paul did not insist on that right. Although animal sacrifices played a major role in the worship system of ancient Israel, the blood of bulls and goats cannot take away sins.

The New Testament has examples of members meeting in private homes. Christians are in the process of forming a spiritual house; no longer strangers, Gentiles are also members of God's household. The church together is a building in the Lord in which the Spirit may reside.

In the third set of passages, we saw that knowledge of the faith was spreading throughout the known world. All things in heaven and on earth are to be subject to the resurrected messiah. Believers should be oriented toward what is above rather than what is on earth. The world is passing away.

Many of the passages in this chapter can be classified in one of three ways with respect to literality or symbolism. Some are literal or mainly so. These include the ones about house churches, households, faith known in the world, and the Elijah passage on prayer for rain. Other



passages are literal but with a symbolic illustrative application. Examples include the productive and unproductive land, the bits in horses' mouths, the seed and the body it receives, and the farmer waiting for the rains. Still others are primarily symbolic -- such as those about the shepherd, the sheep, the olive tree, and the lion. Some are difficult to classify in one of these categories; others may fall outside this system.

Some other passages might have been included in this chapter but would seem to contribute very little to the discussion. A number of place-names were omitted, including many covered in the chapter on Acts. It seemed better to attend to the clearly relevant texts, with extra time on the most significant ones.

Four passages merit special attention for the purpose of this project -- the ones from Galatians 4, Hebrews 11 and 12, and 2 Peter 3. They are important because of what they may imply for the evaluative part of the dissertation. They contain two pertinent and related themes -- (1) the distinction between the world above and the world below and (2) the destiny of the world.

The Jerusalem on earth today is characterized by slavery; the Jerusalem above, by freedom. The latter may be the model for the former. Believers do not focus on Mount Sinai (where the law was given) or on the earthly Mount Zion of Jerusalem but rather on another Mount Zion -- the

heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. They look for a better country or homeland (a heavenly one) or a city with foundations -- with permanence, prepared by God, and yet to come.

A time of judgment is coming. We expect the removal or destruction of the heavens and the earth and their replacement by new heavens and a new earth. The world as we know it will be dissolved, the elements melting with fire. What can be shaken (things made) will be removed, what cannot be shaken will remain. An unshakable, everlasting kingdom is established; with it, we anticipate a new geography.

## CHAPTER 6

### GEOGRAPHY IN REVELATION

#### Introduction

The final chapter of the body of the dissertation covers the geography in the final book of the twenty-seven in the New Testament canon, the book of Revelation or the Apocalypse -- the latter coming from the Greek word for revelation, which is the first word in the book. Although it presents a climax of the gospel message in showing the purpose of God as it is fulfilled in or beyond history, Revelation has frequently been misinterpreted. This tendency has arisen partly from its colorful imagery, a trait which has also helped it to become very influential in Christian art -- e.g., in Byzantine and Gothic churches. Thus some have failed to appreciate its genuine value -- for historical grounding, present encouragement, and future insight.

Revelation is often considered to belong to the literary genre of apocalyptic. In that genre an otherworldly figure mediates to a human being a revelation of a transcendent reality either temporal or spatial or both. It developed from Old Testament prophetic and wisdom literature after the exile, most of it being written between 150 B.C. and 100 A.D. Its features include metaphorical language, visions, and numerical symbolism. Although Revelation has much in common with the apocalyptic genre,

the author has also modified it; only with qualifications can we assign Revelation to that genre (Roloff 1993:1-6; Krodel 1989:42-52).

While Revelation contains prophecy in an apocalyptic style, many scholars have come to believe that its structure is epistolary. It has a prescript and a conclusion customary for letters. Chapters two and three are letters or messages from Christ for seven churches; each letter is actually addressed to the angel of that church. The churches lie on a route going north from Ephesus to Pergamum and then generally southeast to Laodicea, with a westerly return to Ephesus. The messages have thematic connections with other parts of the book. In some cases, the connections are explicit; in others, implicit or suggestive. Apparently (1:11) Revelation was intended to be a circular letter sent to the seven churches (Krodel 1989:51-56; Roloff 1993:7-8, 33-34; Hemer 1986:16).

The traditional author of the book is the apostle John, identified in it by name (1:1, 4, 9); he writes apparently from the island of Patmos off the coast of Asia Minor, possibly in about 95 A.D. Because its contents differ so much from those of the gospel of John, we are treating it in a separate chapter. One may find differences in language, eschatology, Christology, ecclesiology, and conceptual terminology. Thus most scholars reject apostolic Johannine

authorship; yet not all maintain this view (Krodel 1989:61-62; Roloff 1993:11-12).

Especially notable is the use of the number seven, which figures prominently in the structure of the book. There are seven churches, seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven bowls of the wrath of God. Twelve also occurs a few times, and 666 once (Ford 1975:46-48; Roloff 1993:6).

Following the letters to the churches, the book has a scene near the throne of God in heaven; the Lamb, the twenty-four elders, and the four living creatures are present. The seven seals are opened; revealed are four horses with riders, souls under the altar, a great earthquake, the 144,000, and a great multitude. The plagues associated with the seven trumpets bring destruction on the earth. The two witnesses prophesy for 1260 days. The woman and the dragon appear, and the two beasts are described. Three angels deliver messages. The seven last plagues inflict severe damage on the planet. Babylon falls, and Christ returns and reigns with saints for 1000 years. Judgment proceeds from a great white throne. A new heaven and a new earth appear.

Because of the highly symbolic nature of Revelation, its geography is different from that found in other New Testament writings. Yet the realism also found in the book permits recognizable geographical description. The terms or ideas, some of which we have seen before, make a distinct

contribution to the collection of references gathered in this project.

Since we have only one book to discuss in this chapter, it seems possible and desirable to continue with an outline similar to those of the previous chapters. Thus we begin with items under physical geography and follow with those under human geography -- including discussion of the seven churches, recipients of seven letters or messages. As with the earlier material, it is sometimes difficult to classify a text solely under one of the two major subfields of geography; better it may be to consider an overlapping passage as a unit than to fragment it.

### **Physical Geography**

#### **Weather and Natural Disasters**

A few references to clouds may assist in understanding the role of the weather in this book. When Jesus ascended to heaven following his post-resurrection appearances, a cloud concealed him from the eyes of the disciples (Acts 1:9). At his return, he comes with clouds (Revelation 1:7) -- with reference to Daniel 7:13, where the Son of man comes with the clouds of heaven. Later John sees one like a son of man seated on a white cloud (14:14). The returning messiah is not explicitly designated as the Son of man, his frequent title in the gospels; but the golden crown on his head helps to identify this majestic though mysterious figure. Near the middle of the book (10:1), a mighty angel

descends from heaven -- clothed in a cloud with a rainbow over his head, recalling the rainbow around the throne of God in heaven (4:3). These features aid in depicting him as a divine agent. After the two witnesses are resurrected, they ascend to heaven in a cloud while their enemies look on (11:12). Rather than fulfilling a natural meteorological function in these texts, a cloud (being in the lower heaven or terrestrial atmosphere) associates certain beings with the upper heaven and accords them splendor (Krodel 1989:87, 274; Roloff 1993:27, 123, 177).

After the seventh seal is opened, silence in heaven ensues for about half an hour. Soon seven angels begin to sound successively seven trumpets (8:1-13). The texts for the first four trumpets are brief, with associated plagues directly or indirectly affecting the earth. In the first trumpet plague, hail and fire mixed with blood are hurled down from heaven upon the earth. A third part each of the earth, trees, and green grass is burned up. This plague recalls the seventh plague on Egypt in Exodus, but this time the scope is global. While very destructive, the event does not affect all the fertility of the planet.

With the second trumpet comes a plague on the sea -- into which something like a great mountain, burning with fire, is thrown. A third of the sea turns to blood (similar to the first plague on Egypt), a third of living sea creatures dies, and a third of the ships is destroyed.

Seemingly helpless are those on earth against these disasters from heaven; the presence of blood in the first two plagues may provoke thoughts of death.

In the third plague a great star (named Wormwood), blazing like a torch, falls from heaven. Affected this time are rivers and springs of water; a third of the waters becomes wormwood, so that many die from the bitterness. God threatens to feed wormwood (a shrublike plant with a bitter taste) to the false prophets (Jeremiah 23:15). As indicated by its name, it is used as a vermifuge. The effects are the reverse of the miracle at Marah (Exodus 15:25) -- where Moses casts a tree into bitter waters, which become sweet (Zohary 1982:184).

With allusion to the ninth Egyptian plague, the fourth trumpet plague brings darkness in the heavens and consequently on the earth. A third each of the sun, moon, and stars is struck -- so that a third of their light is darkened. The darkness affects the third part of both the day and the night (Roloff 1993:110-11; Corsini 1983:174-78; Krodel 1989:196-98; Ford 1975:132-33). Following this plague, an eagle or vulture announces that yet to be sounded are three more trumpets, with woeful consequences for the inhabitants of the earth. These plagues may be part of a trial to come upon the whole world (Revelation 3:10).

A few chapters later another set of plagues is poured out on the earth, the seven bowl plagues or the seven last



plagues; for with them the wrath of God is completed (15:1). The seven golden bowls are filled with the wrath of God. Both similar and dissimilar are the two sets so that they may be compared and contrasted as follows. Firstly, the second set destroys more intensively. Secondly, the first set targets idolaters in general; the second set in part, worshipers of the beast more specifically. Thirdly, both sets have features of both a call to repentance and divine judgment (Krodel 1989:191-92).

In varying degrees the first four bowl plagues (16:1-9) parallel the first four trumpet plagues. On the earth is poured out the first bowl; corresponding to the sixth Egyptian plague, sores break out on worshipers of the false system. When the second bowl is poured out on the sea it becomes like the blood of a corpse, so that all living creatures in the sea die. Affecting fresh waters (as they did in the third trumpet plague), the third bowl plague turns rivers and springs of water to blood. Analogous to the fourth trumpet plague, the fourth bowl plague affects the area of the heavenly bodies. Yet while the effect there was darkness, here the sun's power increases -- so that it scorches humans with intense heat. In the fifth bowl plague, darkness falls on the throne of the beast; though severely suffering, the guilty do not repent (Ford 1975:261; Krodel 1989:281-85; Roloff 1993:188-90; Corsini 1983: 300-01).

The results of the two sets of plagues are devastating to the physical and human geography of the world. Many works could be written describing the processes which occur and the changes which they bring. While environmental destruction is extreme, these plagues may also purge some pollutants.

Earthquakes occur a few times in Revelation. When the sixth seal is opened (6:12), a great earthquake occurs (cf. Joel 2:10). The sun becomes black and the moon as blood; the stars fall to the earth, as figs from a fig tree shaken by a strong wind. The sky recedes as a scroll, rolling up; the collapse above extends to the earth below -- every mountain and island being removed from its place (6:13-14). Responding to these astronomical and geographical catastrophes (6:15-16) humans hide in caves and among the rocks of the mountains -- calling on those rocks and mountains to fall on them and to conceal them from the face of God and the Lamb (Krodel 1989:179; Ford 1975:264; Roloff 1993:92-93).

Before the first trumpet plague, an angel fills a censer with fire from the altar of the heavenly temple and casts it upon the earth. Then follow peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake (8:5). In an earlier vision (4:5), from the throne of God proceed lightning, rumblings, and thunder (Roloff 1993:107-08; Krodel 1989:156, 194-95).

Following the ascension of the two witnesses, a severe earthquake causes a tenth of the city to fall, with 7000 deaths (11:13). After the sounding of the seventh trumpet, the innermost part of the heavenly temple is opened, with the ark of the covenant visible. Signs associated with divine manifestations (11:19) again occur -- lightning, rumblings, thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail (Krodel 1989:231-32; Roloff 1993:138).

When the seventh bowl is poured out, a loud voice announces that "it is done," apparently the completion of God's judgment in the bowl plagues. Lightning, rumblings, thunder, and a severe earthquake follow; no earthquake like it has occurred since humans have been on the earth (16:17-21). Into three parts is the great city split. Every island flees away and the mountains are not found, a magnitudinous event for geography. From heaven huge hailstones fall on humans, weighing perhaps one hundred pounds each. Some continue to reject God, however, cursing him because of the very great plague of the hail (Roloff 1993:191-92; Krodel 1989:287-89).

#### Water

Although some of the previous passages on weather and natural disasters involved water, others it seems better to treat separately. John describes the awesome characteristics of one like a son of man, e.g., a voice as the sound of many waters (1:15). Background comes from

Ezekiel's description of the voice of God (43:2). When the Lamb stands on Mount Zion with the 144,000, from heaven comes a voice as the sound of many waters and as the sound of loud thunder (14:2). On another occasion what seems to be the voice of a great multitude (19:6), as the sound of many waters and of mighty thunderings, cries out in praise of God (Roloff 1993:36).

Revelation 12 contains the story of the woman, the dragon, and the child. The woman may represent both the faithful Old Testament community and the New Testament church. After giving birth to the child (the messiah), by two wings of a great eagle (signifying God's care, Exodus 19:4) the woman flees for safety into the wilderness to be nourished by God. Although the dragon (or the serpent, i.e., Satan, who deceives the whole world, Revelation 12:9) pursues her and spews from his mouth water like a river to sweep her away, the earth opens its mouth and swallows the river. As a possible parallel (Numbers 16:32), the earth opened its mouth and swallowed Korah and his cohorts (Roloff 1993:151; Krodel 1989:244-45).

Briefly have we discussed all the bowl plagues except the sixth, in which the river Euphrates is dried up to prepare the way for the kings of the east (Revelation 16:12). Thus with this natural protective boundary no longer in service, an invasion from the east is facilitated (Roloff 1993:190; Krodel 1989:285-86).

Of a different sort is another text concerning the water of rivers. In the new Jerusalem the river of the water of life flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb. On either side of the river is the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of (whether different or the same is uncertain) fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree bring healing to the nations (22:1-2). John refers to and modifies texts from Genesis 2:8-10 and Ezekiel 47:12. Not only is the new city on the earth, but it is also a garden or paradise rather than an enclosure of lifeless glamour. Even in the holy city the natural environment has a place of honor. Echoing John 4:10 are a few other texts. From the spring of the water of life, God gives drink freely to the thirsty (Revelation 21:6); whoever wishes may come (22:17). The Lamb leads the redeemed (7:17) to springs of waters of life (Corsini 1983:397-99; Krodel 1989:187-88, 366-67; Roloff 1993:246-47; Attfield 1983:375; Attfield 1991:30-31).

In various passages about water in the book, we have seen it as both a detrimental and a beneficial force or source. Either death or life it may promote. Especially encouraging is its symbolic spiritual role. A number of texts refer to the land and the sea in diverse contexts. Rather than attempting to treat some of them twice, we include them together under the general rubric of water. Since land is so fundamental to geography, we have not

usually considered that term by itself under physical geography. However, we have been collecting references to the whole earth or world in separate sections.

The heavy damage to the earth and the water from the early trumpet plagues we have already described. Before those plagues four angels hold back the four winds of the earth from blowing on the land or the sea or any tree until the servants of God receive a seal of protection from his judgment (7:1-3). In the fifth trumpet plague, harm is to come only to those without the seal of God and not to the grass of the earth or to any green thing or to any tree (9:4). As a result of war in heaven, the dragon (Satan) is expelled and cast down to the earth along with his angels. Heaven may rejoice, but woe seems to be in store for the earth and the sea; for the devil (12:7-12) comes down with great fury (Krodel 1989:181-82, 242-43; Roloff 1993:96-97, 150-51).

The mighty angel of 10:1 holds a little scroll and places his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land (10:2, 5), an indication of his authority to represent God -- the God who has created the earth and the sea and all that is in them as well as heaven and all that is in it (10:6). As judgment of the earth proceeds or approaches, three angels have successive, relevant announcements. The first angel (14:6-7) calls on the inhabitants of the earth

to fear God and to worship the one who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and the springs of water (Krodel 1989:213).

Two evil beings called beasts appear in Revelation. The first beast has seven heads and ten horns and comes up out of the sea (13:1), which is associated with chaos and fearsome monsters. The four beasts of Daniel also came up from the sea (Daniel 7:3). To this beast the dragon gives its power and authority. The second beast, subordinate to the first beast, comes up out of the earth (Revelation 13:11), so that the dragon has control over both earth and sea. Also known as the false prophet, this beast has two horns as a lamb but speaks as a dragon (Ford 1975:210; Krodel 1989:246-48, 253-54; Roloff 1993:156, 162).

In heaven before the throne of God is a sea of glass, like crystal (4:6) -- contrasting with the threatening image of the sea as associated with the first beast. A sea of glass mixed with fire is mentioned in the narrative of the seven bowl plagues; standing beside it are those who are victorious over the beast (15:2). This image may allude to the exodus; the Israelites were rescued from the sea, which became the place of judgment (symbolized by fire) for the Egyptians (Krodel 1989:278; Roloff 1993:183).

A large number of passages relating to the basic geographical features we have seen in this unusual book of the New Testament collection. Often a text uses and adapts motifs from the Old Testament. Since judgment is prominent

in Revelation, the geographical references frequently occur in a context of destruction.

### Biogeography

John sees a vision of the throne of God in heaven (4:2-8). Around that throne are twenty-four other thrones, on which are seated twenty-four elders (perhaps angelic beings), dressed in white robes and wearing golden crowns. Also around the throne are four living creatures, each with six wings and full of eyes in front, in back, all around, and inside. The first creature resembles a lion, the second an ox, the third a human, and the fourth an eagle. In Ezekiel's similar vision (1:6-10), each of the four creatures has four faces (Roloff 1993:69-72; Krodel 1989:154-58).

In the right hand of God, John sees a scroll written on both sides and sealed with seven seals (Revelation 5:1), which no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth is able to open. Then an elder announces that the Lamb is able to open the scroll and its seven seals. After taking the scroll from God, he begins to open the seals (6:1).

The seals partly parallel the prophecy of the Olivet discourse in the synoptics. After each of the first four seals is opened, John sees a horse of a different color and its rider. The equine imagery may be adapted from the visions of the prophet Zechariah (1:7-17; 6:1-8). The first horse is white (Revelation 6:2), with a bow and a crown, its



rider goes forth as a conqueror with a desire to conquer. While some have interpreted the rider as Christ and others as the antichrist, a better choice in context seems to be conquest in general. Concretely a contemporary listener might connect the vision with the Parthians, enemies of Rome to the east.

Bright red is the second horse; its rider receives a large sword and has authority to take peace from the earth, with people slaying one another. Thus this horse and rider symbolize war and bloodshed.

Into view when the Lamb opens the third seal comes a black horse (6:5), whose rider holds a balance or a pair of scales in his hand. For a day's wage (a denarius), about one quart of wheat or three quarts of barley may be purchased. Oil and wine one may not damage; although these might be more available in a time of scarcity, they are not foods for survival. The symbol here is famine, which might come in the wake of warfare from the previous seal plague.

The sequence of the four horses concludes with a pale horse (6:7), whose rider is Death and whose companion on foot behind is Hades. Death by pestilence or disease may be especially intended. The two have power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine, death, and wild beasts of the earth -- with textual reference to Ezekiel 14:21. While this set of images from the animal world is terrifying, it is part of a larger structure of judgment and

salvation under the control of God (Ford 1975:97-99; Roloff 1993:85-87; Krodel 1989:169-75).

When the sixth angel sounds his trumpet, four demonic angels are released to kill a third of humanity (9:15). Under their command are two hundred million mounted troops. The figurative portrayal of the horses includes breastplates of red, blue, and yellow; correspondingly, out of their mouths come fire, smoke, and sulfur -- reminiscent of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:24, 28). Their heads are as the heads of lions. Both in their mouths and in their tails is their power; their tails are like snakes and have heads. Despite this devastating plague and those preceding it, remaining humans continue in idolatry and immorality (Roloff 1993:119; Krodel 1989:204-06).

Not on a donkey but on a white horse is the return of Christ as king of kings and lord of lords (Revelation 19:11). Following him are the armies of heaven, also on white horses. Out of his mouth goes a sharp sword with which to strike the nations, whom he shall rule with a rod of iron. The beast and the kings of the earth with their armies fight against the forces from heaven but are defeated. To the birds of heaven goes a call to gather for the great supper of God (a counterimage of the marriage supper of the Lamb, 19:9), at which they eat the flesh of horses, their riders, and many other humans; the background is in Ezekiel 39:17-20. When Babylon falls, it becomes a

site for demons, unclean spirits, and unclean and hateful birds (Revelation 18:2). Thus we observe a diverse collection of references to horses and birds (Krodel 1989:320-24; Corsini 1983:350; Roloff 1993:217).

As part of the sixth bowl plague, three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouths of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet; they go forth to gather the kings of the whole inhabited earth for the battle on the great day of God Almighty (16:13-14). The place for the battle is called in Hebrew Armageddon, or the mountain of Megiddo. At Taanach by the waters of Megiddo (Judges 5:19), Israel (led by Deborah and Barak) defeated the Canaanites (Roloff 1993:190-91; Krodel 1989:286-87).

When the shaft of the abyss or the bottomless pit is opened after the fifth trumpet sounds, smoke arises from it and darkens the sun and the air (Revelation 9:2). From the smoke come locusts on the earth, having power as the scorpions of the earth. But the locusts may not kill humans but only torture them and only for five months; the torture is as the sting of a scorpion (9:5). As in the sixth trumpet plague, these demonic figures John describes in grotesque detail. They appear as horses ready for battle with faces like humans and what looks like crowns of gold on their heads. Their hair is like women's hair, their teeth like lions' teeth, and their tails (9:7-10) like scorpions' tails (Krodel 1989:201-03; Roloff 1993:114-15).

For a thousand years Satan is bound in the abyss to prevent him from deceiving the nations. During this period the saints reign with Christ (20:1-6; 5:10). After the millennium, Satan is released and comes out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth. Gathered by him for battle, their number is as the sand of the sea. They march up and surround the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire comes down from heaven and consumes them. Into the lake of fire and sulfur (20:7-10) is the devil cast (Krodel 1989:333-37; Roloff 1993:227-29).

The first beast of chapter 13 is portrayed as a parody of the Lamb of chapter 5. As the Lamb receives power from God, so the beast receives it from the dragon. Both rule over humans from every tribe, language, people, and nation. While heavenly creatures offer homage and praise to the Lamb, earthly creatures similarly worship the beast. As the Lamb is marked by its slaughter, so the beast has a deadly wound that is healed. The beast is a composite animal (13:2) drawn from the beasts of Daniel 7; it resembles a leopard, with feet like a bear and a mouth like a lion (Roloff 1993:155).

This large group of passages on physical geography from one book of the Bible notably features destruction on the earth and startling symbolism among the animals. The effects from two sets of plagues, characterized by trumpets and bowls, include water turned to blood and both darkness

and intense heat. The author describes demonic creatures resembling horses, locusts, and frogs. It seems clear that the prophecies of Revelation depict drastic alterations in the physical geography of the planet.

## **Human Geography**

### **Agriculture**

For 1260 days the two witnesses are to prophesy; after that, they are killed and then resurrected (11:3). Evoking imagery from Zechariah 4, the text calls them the two olive trees and the two lampstands which stand before the God of the earth. The symbolism seems to indicate that the two receive power from the Spirit; they may represent the two functions of kingship and priesthood (Revelation 1:6; 5:10). The identity of the witnesses is uncertain; one may note, however, that their works recall those of Moses and Elijah (Roloff 1993:132; Krodel 1989:221-23).

The one like a son of man has a sharp sickle in his hand (14:14). The time to reap has come because the harvest is ripe. Thus this figure seated on a cloud swings his sickle over the earth; the grain harvest of the earth takes place. Various interpretations are possible of this apparent judgment scene; one (based on the parable of the weeds in Matthew 13) is that this harvest is the gathering of the righteous.

From the temple in heaven comes an angel, also with a sharp sickle. Because the grapes from the vine of the earth

are ripe, he gathers the vintage and casts it into the wine press of the wrath of God (Revelation 14:17-20). A possible interpretation of this vintage harvest, corresponding to the suggestion above, is the gathering of the wicked. The wine press is trodden outside the city, outside the residence of the faithful. The blood flow from the press is enormous, as high as a horse's bridle for about 180 miles. This distance could refer approximately to the length of Palestine; symbolically it could picture destruction across the entire earth. Old Testament background comes from Joel 3:13-16 and Isaiah 63:1-6. The messiah (Revelation 19:15) treads the wine press of the wrath of God the Almighty (Roloff 1993:177-79, 219; Krodel 1989:271-76, 323; Corsini 1983:268-71).

Although the material for agricultural geography in the book is limited, the harvest scene is impressive in its details. Two images, the wine press (here) and the cup of wrath (14:10; 16:19), John combines to depict divine judgment.

#### Urban Geography

Upon the first beast (13:1) sits a woman, dressed in purple and scarlet and adorned with gold and jewels (17:4). A golden cup she holds in her hand, yet it is full of abominations and filth. On her forehead is written a name identifying her -- Babylon the great. Many (but not all)

interpreters equate Babylon with Rome. The woman is seated on seven hills (17:9), another possible reference to Rome.

In elaborate detail John describes the fall of Babylon, the great city. With her the kings of the earth have committed (spiritual) fornication, i.e., idolatry. By cooperating with her way of life, the merchants of the earth have grown rich (18:3). Both groups weep and mourn over her fall. No one buys the cargo of the merchants any more. That cargo included gold, silver, precious stones, fine linen, articles of ivory and costly wood, cinnamon, incense, wine, olive oil, fine flour, wheat, cattle, sheep, and horses. From many parts of the world this merchandise has come. At the end of the list are slaves (literally, bodies) and souls of humans. Much of the luxurious lifestyle of Rome was made possible through the labor of slaves, who are seen here as items of merchandise. Parallels one may find in the commerce of Tyre (Ezekiel 27). No workman of any trade is to be found in the city again (Revelation 18:22). All nations were deceived by the lure of the Babylonian system (Ford 1975:298-99; Roloff 1993:197-98; 205-07; Krodel 1989:292-96, 301-09).

In sharp contrast to the great city of the world is the holy city, the new Jerusalem (21:1). It is part of the new creation, the new heaven and the new earth (21:1), apparently not a renewal but rather a new beginning. God himself says that he is making everything new (21:5). The

first heaven and the first earth pass away, they flee from the presence of God, no place is found for them (20:11). As the dwelling of God, the city needs neither sun nor moon; for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. Nothing unclean enters into it. The servants of God will see his face (Roloff 1993:231, 234-36; Krodel 1989:337-38, 343-48, 352-54).

In Appendix C, we included brief descriptions of a number of the cities, some of which were in Asia Minor, on the route of Paul's missionary journeys. The seven cities in which the seven churches of Revelation are located are in the Roman province of Asia in the larger region of Asia Minor. We now give a few details about these cities (except Ephesus) and the contents of the messages to the churches in them.

The first city, Ephesus, we have already discussed in the appendix. Jesus commends their labor and perseverance but criticizes them for learning their first love (2:1-7).

Smyrna, modern Izmir, was originally a colony; following its destruction, it was rebuilt on a nearby site as a Hellenistic city. It was an important seaport in the first century A.D. because it was located at the end of a trade route coming west from the interior. Its acropolis, Mount Pagus, had temples and other buildings and was known as the crown of Smyrna. This beautiful city had been a faithful ally of Rome; in 26 A.D. it was permitted to build



a temple to Tiberius. To this church Jesus apparently has no explicit words of criticism (2:8-11). Though suffering affliction and poverty, they are spiritually rich; if they remain faithful unto death, they will receive the crown of life (Ford 1975: 392-94; Hemer 1986:57-60, 70-71; Krodel 1989:110-11).

The early city of Pergamum was built on a hill a thousand feet above the plain below and about fifteen miles from the Aegean coast. It overlooks a large territory from the hills inland in the northeast to the sea. Among its religious monuments were those in honor of Zeus Soter and Asklepios, the god of healing. The message (2:12-17) to the church says that they dwell where the throne of Satan is -- perhaps because it was the center of emperor worship. Jesus commends their faithfulness but holds them guilty for adhering to the teaching of Balaam and thus eating food sacrificed to idols and committing fornication (Krodel 1989:113-15; Ford 1975:398-400; Hemer 1986:78-85).

The longest message goes to the church in the least important of the cities, Thyatira (2:18-29). It lies on nearly level ground in a broad valley. To the southeast and southwest a sandy plain extends, perhaps further conveying the impression of dependence and weakness. Though it had no effective acropolis, it functioned as a garrison city. Merchants, tanners, metalworkers, and others belonged to its important trade guilds. The guilds had a religious basis,

with members participating in festivities associated with a god -- such as eating food sacrificed to idols. This failing the message calls on the church to renounce while also noting their love, faith, and works (Hemer 1986:107-11; Ford 1975:404-05; Krodel 1989:122-23).

The small acropolis of the fifth city, Sardis (3:1-6), was built on a spur of a mountain 1500 feet above a plain. This royal stronghold, steeply approached at most points, provided refuge in time of war for citizens, who normally lived below. It was the capital of the kingdom of Lydia, ruled by the wealthy Croesus in the sixth century B.C. Despite its remarkable fortress, it was captured twice in ancient times. A major earthquake in 17 A.D. did extensive damage; it was rebuilt with aid from Tiberius, to whom the city raised a temple. The message to Sardis is primarily a rebuke; it has a name of being alive but is dead. Yet a few have not defiled their garments (Hemer 1986:129-34; Krodel 1989:130-31; Ford 1975:410).

The earthquake of 17 A.D. was also a disaster for Philadelphia, the sixth city (3:7-13). It may have experienced aftershocks; for some time thereafter, some of the residents left the city in the evening or lived in the surrounding area. Its volcanic soil was fertile, being especially appropriate for vines. The name may refer to the loyalty or brotherly love of two brothers, one of whom may have founded the city. Only to Philadelphia and to Smyrna

is there no call to repent. Though they have little power, they have not denied the name of messiah; the overcomers will be pillars in the temple (Ford 1975:416; Krodel 1989:135-36; Hemer 1986:153-58).

Located in the Lykos valley near Hierapolis and Colossae and at the junction of three trade routes, Laodicea (3:14-22) was a banking center and wealthy enough to rebuild from an earthquake in about 60 A.D. without help from Rome. Its school of medicine had specialists in ophthalmology and may have produced an eyesalve. From local sheep it manufactured black woolen clothing. While the waters of Hierapolis were hot and medicinal and those of Colossae cold and refreshing, those of Laodicea were comparatively warm. These local features provide background for the censure of the Laodiceans in the message. They do not realize that they are poor, blind, and naked (Krodel 1989:140-44; Hemer 1986:186-91, 196-201; Ford 1975:419-22).

Under the category of urban geography for the dissertation, Revelation contains an extensive description of the corrupt commercial city of Babylon; many leaders and merchants have cooperated with its system. The contrasting holy city of the new Jerusalem comes down out of heaven from God; outside the city are murderers and idolaters. Seven messages to the angels of seven churches in the Roman province of Asia address issues in those churches.

## Conclusion

In the last chapter of the central body of the dissertation, we have searched for and examined the geographical passages in a single book, a unique one in the canon of the New Testament. Its largely apocalyptic content distinguishes it from the books of the previous chapter, with which it shares the epistolary form. Although the amount of biblical text for this chapter is less or much less than that for any of the other chapters, that text seems to be soaked in geography. Not surprising is this geographical prominence when we notice how much of the book deals with events on the earth, though they may be directed or overseen from heaven. The high frequency of Old Testament allusions might also lead us to expect a high geographical profile. Geography is woven into the fabric of this theologically rich composition.

To begin a review of the chapter, we look at texts for physical geography. A set of trumpet plagues brings considerable damage to the planet. The earth itself is burned up, as are trees and green grass. Some sea waters become blood while some rivers and springs of water become bitter. Another set of plagues, the bowl plagues, is even more destructive. Painful sores afflict those who hold to the false system. The sun scorches people with its intensified heat. Darkness engulfs the kingdom of the beast.

Following war in heaven, Satan is thrown down to the earth; its inhabitants may suffer the consequences of his wrath. The first beast of Revelation, which the whole world follows, emerges from the sea. Humans worship both the dragon and the beast. The second beast rises from the land and performs great signs, causing fire to come down from heaven to earth.

With each of the first four seals is associated one of the four horses or horsemen of the apocalypse. The horses (of the colors white, red, black, and pale) and their riders symbolize, respectively, conquest, war, famine, and death (especially by pestilence). In the sixth trumpet plague the troops of cavalry number two hundred million; fire, smoke, and sulfur coming from the mouths of the horses kill one third of the human population. In the sixth bowl plague three demonic spirits, which look like frogs, gather the kings of the whole world to the battle of that great day at Armageddon.

Although we found fewer passages for human than for physical geography, the harvest narrative is graphically instructive. Two harvests take place, of grain and of the vine, and may symbolize, respectively, the eschatological gathering of the righteous and the wicked. The amount of blood flowing from the wine press in the second harvest may indicate a large number in the second human category. Seven

churches in seven cities on a circular route in Asia receive messages applying to local conditions from the messiah.

In this richly symbolic book many of the geographical references are symbolic or metaphorical. The dragon represents the devil; the two beasts under his authority seem to represent political and religious authorities. Other symbolic images include the harlot on the first beast, the horses and horsemen, the locusts, the frogs, and the lamb. Agricultural imagery is found in the reaping of the harvest and the olive trees. Colors and numbers are also used figuratively. Some of the references may be literal, however. In the trumpet and the bowl plagues, the earth, the sea, the rivers, and the springs of water may apply physically to our planet. Features from Babylon (merchants and merchandise) may be literal for a particular city. Symbolism is extensive in Revelation, however.

A few other texts we might have cited, some of them additional references to terms already discussed. In some classes of references, the coverage has been more than representative -- adequate, if not more than adequate, for our needs. The passages included supply a large amount of data for the analysis and synthesis inherent in the purpose of the project.

Several passages touch on themes important for the dissertation, themes that have appeared in previous chapters. One of them is the contrast between the above and

the below, or perhaps also the eternal and the temporal. John sees a new heaven and a new earth. The holy city, the new Jerusalem, descends out of heaven from God. Heaven comes down to earth; God dwells with humans. What is above is the model for what is below. The new city is also portrayed as a bride adorned for her husband (21:1-3). In corrupt contrast stands the great city Babylon (17:1-6; 18:1-3), the harlot with whom the leaders of the world have committed fornication (Roloff 1993:235-36).

A second theme is the fate or destiny of the world. The old heaven and the old earth pass away and leave the presence of the holy God; a place for them there is no longer. God is making all things new. A new creation replaces the old one.

A third theme is change in geography. The effects of the trumpet and the bowl plagues on the land and the waters provide evidence that the old or present geography will not continue indefinitely. Perhaps especially direct confirmation of terrestrial transformation comes from the several earthquakes mentioned in the book. A severe one occurs in the sixth seal and another one after the two witnesses ascend to heaven. In the final bowl plague occurs the greatest earthquake in human history. The image of the river of the water of life with the tree of life on each side of the river has background in prophetic texts and recalls the garden of Eden, yet it surpasses the scene in

the Genesis account. If such striking changes occur on the surface and in the interior of the earth, an academic curriculum of the future would include a geography with a different content.



## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION

#### **Description of New Testament Geography**

The last five chapters have primarily described the geography as found in the text of the New Testament, for both its physical and human subfields. Perhaps surprisingly for an overtly religious document, we found a large quantity of geographical material. Although each chapter contained many pertinent references, the distribution was uneven. The synoptics had a larger concentration, for example; for the epistles, it was often smaller. Within the geographical disciplines the text was not evenly balanced either; for instance urban, occupational, and biogeographical texts were more concentrated in some sections than in others. Even at the descriptive level then, diversity is a notable feature of New Testament geography. It is difficult to be systematic without distorting the empirical data.

In the geographically rich synoptic gospels under physical geography, we discussed texts under the categories of mountains, the Olivet discourse, weather, phytogeography, and zoogeography. Peter and two other disciples are with Jesus on the mountain of transfiguration. Jesus calms a storm on the Sea of Galilee and walks on its waters. The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed. God cares even for sparrows. Locusts and wild honey form the diet of John the Baptist. One ought not to give to the dogs holy things.

Under human geography we discussed agriculture, occupations, and urban geography. In the parable of the sower, four kinds of soil reveal different responses to the word. On the left are goats and on the right are sheep in a narrative of judgment. Four of the original twelve disciples are fishermen. Jesus is a carpenter and the son of a carpenter. In the parable of the pounds, the reward is authority over cities. While the house of the wise builder stands against the storm, that of the foolish builder falls.

In the gospel of John, physical geographical content included passages on mountains and water. In the worship of the true God, one's attitude is more important than terrestrial location. Jesus gives water more satisfying for eternal purposes than ordinary well water. At the feast of tabernacles, Jesus declares himself to be the source of living water. Agriculture and occupations we discussed for human geography. Jesus, not the manna in the wilderness, is the true bread from heaven. He is also the true vine; his followers must abide in him to bring forth fruit. The messiah is the good shepherd, who gives his life for the sheep. In contrast, a hired servant flees when he sees the wolf coming. Peter receives a commission to feed the sheep. After his resurrection, Jesus helps some of the disciples to catch many fish.

In the book of Acts, geography is a regular feature. After his arrest, Paul travels to Rome by sea but is

shipwrecked on the way. The account of that adventure is covered under physical geography, as are various passages on biogeography. At Lystra following a healing, the residents nearly sacrifice oxen to Paul and Barnabas. In a vision Peter is commanded to eat a variety of animals, which apparently represent the Gentiles. Within human geography we found several occupations. Peter stays with a tanner named Simon. Paul, a tentmaker, meets two other ones in Corinth. Lydia deals in purple cloth. Soldiers are mentioned several times. The early church in Jerusalem holds possessions in common and distributes to those in need.

The next chapter covered both the Pauline and the general epistles. Texts for physical geography related to weather and biogeography. Images from Jude and 2 Peter characterize false teachers. Elijah prayed that it would not rain and later that it would rain. The devil goes about as a roaring lion. The garments of the wealthy have become moth-eaten. The tongue is a powerful instrument for both good and evil; every species of reptiles, birds, and other animals humans may tame, but not the tongue. Passages under human geography came from agriculture and from urban and settlement geography. Both Paul and Apollos are servants of God; one plants and the other waters, yet God grants the growth. The farmer waits patiently for the former and the latter rains. Paul uses the olive tree to illustrate God's

dealings with Jews and Gentiles. The blood of sacrificial animals cannot effectively remove the effects of sin. House churches are a feature of early Christianity. Not satisfied with the present civilization, Abraham looked for a city designed and built by God. Other passages referred to the world in general or to parts of it. Jerusalem above is a model for an earthly counterpart. God's voice shook the earth at Mount Sinai; later he is to shake both heaven and earth. Some mock at the promise of the parousia (the second coming); but God has already intervened when he judged the earth by water, and he will judge it again -- this time by fire. New heavens and a new earth are yet to come.

Though heavily symbolic, the book of Revelation contained a large amount of geography. Under physical geography, we covered texts on weather and natural disasters, water, and biogeography. The first four trumpet plagues affect land and water, both salt and fresh. Another set of plagues, the bowl plagues, is even more devastating. Humans hide in caves and mountains in the day of wrath. The first beast comes up from the sea and the second from the earth. Associated with divine manifestations are thunder and lightning. Before the heavenly throne of God is a sea of glass. Christ returns on a white horse, followed by armies on white horses. Spirits appearing like frogs aid in gathering the kings of the earth to the fierce battle. Texts for human geography appear for agriculture and urban

geography. The righteous and the wicked are harvested at the eschaton. The mighty city Babylon is a model of corruption. To the angels of seven churches in Asia, the messiah addresses messages of comfort and concern.

To supplement the discussions in the chapters of the main body, we included three appendices. The first covered the geography of Palestine, with its four belts running north to south across the land from west to east. The second outlined the climate of Palestine. The third primarily described geography in the eastern Mediterranean in the order of the narrative of the Acts with special concern for cities visited by Paul.

### **New Testament Perspectives on Geography**

#### **Introduction**

In the five chapters of the main body of the dissertation and in the first part of the concluding chapter, we have described with consolidation the geography of the New Testament. We now wish to discuss the perspectives on geography found in our document. Already we have done quite a bit of this in parts of the conclusions in the main body chapters; we still need to bring the parts together and to create a more explicit whole.

We have found quite a bit of geographical diversity as well as unity in the New Testament. Not all of the ideas about geography appear in each of the five main chapters. Several similar terms we may use to express our goal in this

section. The perspectives on geography are the attitudes about geography as found in the New Testament. They are the ideas, especially the fundamental ones, about the field. Other terms -- such as world view, beliefs, and understanding -- are rough semantic equivalents.

One geographer, Jeanne Kay, has written of biblical or especially Old Testament attitudes toward nature. One may have an appreciative or an unappreciative attitude toward nature. One may contrast modern scientific attitudes and traditional attitudes toward nature. She believed that in the Old Testament God rewards good human behavior with a flourishing environment and punishes evil behavior with a deteriorating one (Kay 1989:216-19). These underlying general themes the text expresses in specific instances. Another author, Robin Attfield, referred to Christian (in contrast to other religious) attitudes to nature, which one may document in various historical periods (Attfield 1983:369-70). Not all Christians have concurred in their views of nature. Analogously not all attitudes toward geography in the New Testament may be easily accommodated in a system; we must work with the diversity while not failing to accept demonstrated unity.

We are seeking ways of thinking about geography or perhaps the role of geography in the New Testament -- to introduce two more terms. Similarly, we might look for attitudes or perspectives in the New Testament (or in other

documents) toward other subjects -- such as music, medicine or the military. We are searching for a rather small number of larger ideas or orientations which underlie many of the detailed passages on geography.

A biblical scholar, W. D. Davies, has written a work with a purpose perhaps parallel or analogous to this one. The issue is the role of the land in the New Testament. In the Old Testament the land of Israel was a central reality. To the patriarch Abraham and his descendants, God gave the promise of the land -- that is, the promised land. The land was God's land, with which he was closely associated, especially at the temple. The people were also closely associated with the land; it was traumatic when they were exiled from it, joyous when they were restored to it. In recent history, the Zionist movement has sought a return to the land.

Jesus appeared in space as well as in time, so that the land of his life is still significant; we might speak not only of the historical but also the geographical Jesus. In the New Testament, however, the attachment to the land has diminished. One possible clue to the reason for the change in emphasis is the influx into the church of Gentiles, who did not have the Jewish background of concern with the land. Another consideration is the global and cosmic perspective of New Testament thought. The significance of the message of redemption and salvation in the gospel was not limited to

one particular territory but rather had much larger spatial dimensions (Davies 1974:161-63, 334-35, 365-70, 375).

As that previous work sought the New Testament attitudes toward the specific land of Israel, so this work seeks its attitudes toward land in general or the earth -- that is, toward geography. We now proceed, as a consequence of the findings of the study thus far, to specify the attitudes or perspectives of the New Testament toward geography. It was not known in advance what these attitudes would be or that there would be a list of them. The attitudes became apparent in the inductive process of this work; the list developed chapter by chapter as the discussion progressed. We are identifying seven attitudes collected into three groups, with a three-three-one distribution of the seven. Each of the next three sections discusses one group of ideas.

#### Symbolism, Teleology, and Heavenly Counterparts

The first idea or attitude is the distinction between literal or physical and symbolic or figurative treatment of geographical features in the text. This distinction applies to both the land and its occupancy, to both physical and human geography. Geographers often treat their subject matter quite literally, if they see their task to be scientific observation, analysis, and synthesis. More humanistic geographers may include symbolic interpretation in their studies in varying degrees. The New Testament



record on this matter then should reveal one of its basic attitudes toward geography.

Among the five main chapters we found variations in the literal/symbolic ratio. The synoptics contain a wealth of material of both types. The references to scorpions and sparrows are mainly literal, but many of the biogeographical references are symbolic -- e.g., the two points about camels and the one about swine and dogs. A mixed distribution we also found elsewhere in the chapter on the synoptics. Since Jesus often taught in parables, it may not be surprising to see a heavy symbolic component. Although rich symbolism appears in the gospel of John, quite a bit of the treatment is literal. Symbolic passages include those on the vine and the branches, the shepherd and the sheep, and the well water in Samaria. The references to the green grass, the garden spot, and perhaps the fig tree are more literal; in addition, the symbolic passages are often physically grounded. The book of Acts features the history of the early church and, accordingly, is predominantly literal on the scale.

A high percentage of the books of the New Testament are epistles, containing a diversity of subject matter. The geography was often symbolic -- e.g., in the traits of the false teachers and in much of the book of James, a practical book with lessons from and for life. Some of the more historical texts about the church and the spread of the

faith in the Pauline corpus were more literal. Paul also contributed the symbolic passage on the olive tree. Revelation is rich in symbolism. It contains biogeographical references which fall in this class -- to locusts, frogs, horses, and beasts. Yet if one views many of the disasters on the earth as future history, then quite a bit of the geography may be literal.

Concerning the first idea, that of literal/symbolic manner of treatment, we thus have a variety of approaches in the New Testament. As a whole, one might say that New Testament geography on this point is quite unlike that of most geographical treatises. That many of the references are literal is noteworthy; this religious document is often thoroughly terrestrial. Yet both the amount and the diversity of the symbolic content is perhaps part of the document's distinctive geographical signature.

The second attitude in the New Testament concerning geography is related to the first one through its symbolic character. We are calling it teleology (i.e., purpose or design) in creation. It applies mainly to the natural or created part of geography and especially to biography -- perhaps more to animals but also to plants. The idea is prominent in the synoptics, where Jesus uses characteristics of plants and animals to illustrate his teaching. The idea here is that parts of the creation may have been designed with various qualities to instruct others -- especially

humans, but perhaps also perceptive animals. In the synoptics examples from phytogeography include the mustard seed, the sycamine tree, the fig tree, and weeds. From zoogeography, we may cite the fox, the dog, the swine, the sheep, and the goat. In the epistles we may find as pertinent instances the flower of the field, the lion, and the moth. Revelation contributes with the horse and the lamb. In some cases, the creatures illustrate paradoxes, surprises or reversals of expectations; examples include God's care for sparrows, the camel through the eye of the needle, and Jesus on the donkey.

The traditional traits of some of the animals, for instance -- such as the roaring lion, the sly fox, the destructive moth, and the docile sheep -- the New Testament suggests to be purposive rather than accidental. That document is not unique in having such biogeographical characterizations. But it seems to be a noticeable idea there -- with a special flavor added in the illustrations by Jesus.

Related to the first two ideas, especially to the second one, is the third idea of heavenly counterparts. We see it mainly in the book of Revelation, although its implications may be found elsewhere. The idea is that there are counterparts of earthly creatures in heaven. Actually the models are those in heaven; the creatures with which we are familiar are their earthly counterparts. One example is

the set of twenty-four elders around the throne of God, perhaps angelic prototypes of the twelve patriarchs and the twelve apostles. A second example is the set of four living creatures, also around the throne, with each resembling one of four earthly creatures -- a lion, an ox, a human or an eagle (Krodel 1989:155-57). The unclean spirits like frogs may be another example. There is also a temple in heaven. We might suppose that other earthly creatures have heavenly models in various angelic beings. To acknowledge this idea or attitude of the New Testament toward geography is to admit the possibility of divine purpose in that field.

#### Transcendence, Temporality, and Destiny

The next three New Testament attitudes have in common a metaterrestrial view of the earth with its effects on geography. The attitudes are concerned basically with space, time, and quality of works, respectively -- although it is difficult to separate them entirely.

The fourth attitude, idea or theme is the dualism of the world above and the world below. This vertical distinction is prominent in the gospel of John in contrast to a horizontal distinction in the synoptics. Jesus tells his listeners that they are from below while he is from above. They are of this world while he is not. He came down from heaven and is returning to it. The Father above sent him on his mission; he needs not credentials or authority from earthly sources. In the epistles as well

does this theme occur. Jerusalem above is the model for Jerusalem below; the lower world is subordinate to the upper one. Corrupted by sin, this world falls short of the ideal standard of the other world. The people of God look to the city of the living God and to a Mount Zion other than the one in the earthly city. The goal of the faithful is a heavenly country or a city prepared by God.

It is not that we make a pilgrimage to a place on the earth but rather that our life on the earth is a pilgrimage. On the earth we sojourn; the new birth is from above. We forsake attachments to all possessions, including lands or fields (Luke 14:33; Matthew 19:29). Yet the earth, though it passes away (Matthew 24:35), does not lose significance; however, the earth which abides is a new earth.

This attitude is also found in Revelation. Coming down from God in heaven is the new Jerusalem, the holy city -- not defiled with wickedness as is the city in our world. Babylon the great is a model for the deceitful cities prominent in the earth at this time. This fourth attitude indicates to us that today's geography is not ideal and could be much better.

The fifth attitude is the temporality of the world or change in geography. It appears especially in prophetic sections -- including Revelation and the Olivet discourse. The eschatological plagues bring major change in the form and the content of the earth -- to both the land and the sea

and perhaps also the atmosphere. Desolating and destructive, earthquakes may transform the surface of the world, the scene of geographical inquiry. But the geography beyond the devastation is a better one; its description reminds us of the garden of Eden, yet it improves even on the conditions there. The geography, both physical and human, to be studied in the age to come we expect to be different from the one studied today; yet the details are not completely clear.

The fate or destiny of the world is the sixth theme or attitude of the New Testament with respect to geography, occurring in Revelation and in Hebrews and 2 Peter among the epistles. This world is to pass away; it is now in the process of doing so. A tension exists between the not yet and the already, similar to that for the kingdom of God. A new heaven and a new earth replace the first heaven and the first earth, which flee from the face of God. A new creation with a new geography appears.

The old world stands under judgment for its works. The elements dissolve or disintegrate, melting in the fire. God shakes both heaven and earth; what is shaken is removed, what is stable and cannot be shaken remains. An unmovable everlasting kingdom is established. An awareness of these future events with their geographical implications should affect our conduct continually.

## **The Nature of Geography**

The seventh attitude or idea occurs most explicitly in Acts although it is implicit elsewhere. The idea is that God is the author of geography, the determiner of its nature. He created the earth and all that it contains and gives life and breath to all persons. All nations he created to live on the face of the earth. He also regulated human activities both in time and in space -- the latter through boundaries political or geographical. Because geography is creation and not simply nature, the inhabitants of the earth are answerable to the creator for their actions.

These attitudes or perspectives seem to characterize the approach of the New Testament to geography. Neither equally prominent nor equally important are they. They are not all unique to it although the composite may be. For some, of special interest are the attitudes toward geography of this document. For the subject matter of the field in the New Testament, this collection of attitudes testifies to a divine dimension.

### **Implications for the Study and the Practice of Geography**

#### **The Nature of the Implications**

Most of the dissertation has described the geography contained in the New Testament. We have also presented thoughts on the attitudes or perspectives on geography in

that document. We now continue in an evaluative mode to discuss the implications of the previous findings for the field of geography as it is studied in theory or accomplished in practice.

At hand we have a large collection of data for New Testament geography, both descriptive and perspective. In broad terms, we wish to comment on what should be studied or practiced in geography and how it should be done -- that is, the content and the methodology of the field. What might we expect the New Testament to tell us about that content and methodology?

Several possibilities we may consider. Firstly, we may conclude that the document contributes little or nothing. Despite the wealth of geographical data contained in them, the books have no normative statement to make about the field of geography. The data may be interesting historically or religiously; but since the New Testament is not a geographical document, it does not intend to tell us about the what and the how of the field. Yet we ought not confuse authority with insight. Even if we say that we do not accept what the document implies or states, it still may provide understanding about the structure of the field.

Secondly, we may see the New Testament as a code book -- analogous to claims made about the Torah (the first five books of the Old Testament). By examining its contents at some level (letters, words or thoughts), we may derive



definitive standards for geography. Many Christians view the Bible (perhaps especially the New Testament) as the word of God. One might conclude that it expresses the mind or attitude of God at least implicitly if not explicitly on the subject matter of geography.

Between these two extremes lie two other positions which would allow us to use the data that we have collected or other direct statements in the 27 books. One of them, the third possibility, is that we may inspect our geographical data and suggest some directions for the field of geography. Our understanding may be faulty, but we may still try to coordinate the data with what we know about geography. We may not agree with the implications of the New Testament, but it does have implications.

The fourth possibility is that we may use statements of general principles found in the document to guide our conclusions, including statements not yet cited in this work. Such principles may be broadly applicable to many subjects or areas of life or existence.

Of these four options the last two together appear to be the most appropriate. We have already used the geographical data to conclude about attitudes, which attitudes may be input for the implications. We may continue to use the direct geographical data as well as broad principles for the current task.

In 1988 a coalition of British geographers formed a group later called Christians in Geography, which recognized that our faith and perspective on life might influence the practice of our profession. The group held its third annual meeting in 1991 to discuss the possibilities for a Christian contribution to human geography. Some of the comments from this conference are pertinent for this work in determining how the store of New Testament understanding might address issues in geography. Both Christians and non-Christians may disagree about what the New Testament implies for geography. Even as students or readers of the Bible reach different conclusions on other subjects, so we may expect that they would do so about implications for geography. Additionally, while New Testament input may add to and challenge conventional geographical ideas, it would also find much common ground with them (Park 1994:20; Olliver 1989:106).

One participant at the conference, Michael Bradshaw, found that Christian principles could influence each stage of the process of research -- i.e., choice of worthy topics, question formulation, data collection, theory construction, and application to change in geography and society (Clark 1991:339-43). For the similar purposes of this project, we might say that we would look for input from the New Testament in determining legitimate general areas of study (the outline of the field), more specific topics or cases within these areas, methodology or how to do what we do,

development of theory, and both academic and practical application. These expectations might also apply to other sources of geographical criticism or analysis.

### The Nature of the Field of Geography

Before exploring New Testament implications for the study and the practice of geography in detail, we wish to examine more closely the nature of the field (geography) for which those implications would apply in order to direct our comments more accurately. To begin, let us review the composition of the field of geography as described in the first chapter. We found it to encompass the subfields of physical, human and regional geography, geographical techniques, and the history of geography -- with all but the last containing various disciplines. While different persons might find different subfields or disciplines to be more interesting or important, most if not all of them appear to be parts of the whole comprising the universe of knowledge. Thus they would be legitimate candidates for academic study, quite possibly within the field of geography.

One could argue that certain techniques (such as remote sensing and geographic information systems) have become possible only with advances in human civilization and are thus not basic or natural disciplines for study, being further removed from creation. But one could also reason similarly to a degree about some of the disciplines in human

geography. Some might also question the importance of the history of geography. However, the Bible itself is in large part a historical document; to be ignorant of the past is to be a plant without roots. If we in the present ignore our past, we should expect those in the future to ignore their past -- including us. Thus the basic divisions of geography seem to qualify for academic study. Yet specific topics within those divisions may not necessarily be admitted based on New Testament examples or principles.

Although geographers may accept this basic structure of geography, they have still disagreed about exactly what geography is or what geographers do. To attempt to be nebulously inclusive by saying that geography is what geographers do seems inadequate. But neither may some of the narrower ideas about the nature of the field be inclusive enough.

A good starting point in specifying both the what and the how of geography may be found in the four traditions proposed by William Pattison. Although each of the traditions has roots in antiquity and although one may pursue all of them concurrently or in combination, in modern studies each one appears to have been dominant in succession. The variety in the traditions in geography has contributed to the variety in the definitions of geography. The first is the earth science tradition. Chiefly applying to physical geography, it encompasses the study of the earth

and its waters and atmosphere. Next is the man-land tradition, going back in concept to Hippocrates. More recently, it includes positions taken by both William Morris Davis and Harlan Barrows. Both environmentalism and possibilism may fall within this tradition. The third entry is the area studies tradition, notably associated with Richard Hartshorne. Finally, we have the spatial tradition, which has become prominent with quantitative innovations. Geography has become more inclusive as it has discovered new topics or invented new techniques. The definition of the field has developed as geographers have explored its boundaries.

Rather than to identify geography with one of these traditions to the exclusion of the others, it may be better to consider each tradition as a part of the whole. To do so might help to unify the field and to bring mutual appreciation for the work of other geographers outside one's own specialty. It might also help to clarify the nature of the field of geography to researchers in other fields and to the general public. (Pattison 1964:211-16; Martin and James 1993:431-33).

Richard Peet has referred to a "permanent identity crisis" in geography due to the complexity of the field. He found geography to be the study of the interactions between society and nature. Either entity may be the cause; we may have both natural evolution and social evolution. The

possibility for different emphases in this wide-ranging field has made it difficult to settle on a single definition for it. (Yet if we include all four traditions in a multi-part definition, we build a richer texture.)

An attempt Peet has made to resolve some of the tension among the four traditions. Space has been separated from a base in nature with the growth of geography as a quantitative spatial science. The space of proper concern in geography is not an abstract concept but rather a space which helps to distinguish "areas of natural difference." Better is it to combine space with nature and society than to separate it from them (Peet 1998:1-2).

The name of the field itself suggests that its subject matter would be the earth in some sense. Based on the progress of research, geography would include both physical and human components -- the physical features of the earth (especially its surface) and the interactions of humans with those features. Alfred Hettner believed, however, that what gave geography its unity was not its subject matter but its method. While history considers humanity and its physical environment in terms of time, geography does so in terms of space. For Hettner the concept of chorology or areal variation more particularly provided the geographical method (Martin and James 1993:172-73).

Especially in human geography it would seem that manner or method is central. One studies economic, historical or

political geography, for instance. That is, one looks at the spatial or geographical dimension of economics, history or political science. We consider the geography of another field rather than geography in the abstract. Perhaps physical geography has its own subject matter, as in hydrology or geomorphology. The integrative and yet particular subfield of regional geography combines the physical and the human; both empirical content and spatial relations of other fields are pertinent.

#### A Christian World view for Geography

Fundamental to the relevance of New Testament attitudes toward geography is the view of humanity created in the image of God. Humans as stewards for or agents of God then have a responsibility for the creation. The same God is the creator of all things and thus is the author of both the physical universe and the moral universe or the universe of values, which values are enunciated in the New Testament. This set of values provides guidance for the treatment of the earth and for the study of the earth, i.e., for the doing of geography.

Through misuse of freedom, humans have failed to fulfill their potential as creatures. Original essential ideality has become corrupted into existential reality. That is, sin has permeated human geographical culture. David Ley offered a Christian ethical analysis of the city and called for a view of "man ... which acknowledges both

his dignity and his depravity." While there is a corporate dimension to the structure of existence, "it is privatistic iniquity, not social inequity, which is the root cause of evil in the city." We may also pass on from diagnosis to prognosis and note the New Testament promise of redemption, the salvation from or healing of sin. Both the critique and the solution based on New Testament thought contrast with others derived from other world views (Cobb 1982:220-23; Park 1994:28; Clark 1991:341-42).

When (not that it always does so) geography becomes focused on what is objective, observable, measurable, and quantifiable, it is unlikely to ask qualitative, philosophical or religious questions -- which may seem irrelevant and embarrassing. Yet geography and values interact, and they do so reciprocally. Geographical settings may inform religious experience, while the latter may endow the former with significance. Thus a geography which omits the religious (including the biblical) dimension of experience is incomplete.

A human community centered in God and exhibiting New Testament character may be conducive to the production of Christian geographical output. In such a setting geography (and other fields) could develop an understanding of land/earth as the creation of a creator rather than as nature independent -- nature worshiped or nature degraded. Two issues in particular for which New Testament



perspectives on geography could be applied are social injustice and poverty (as by Ley) and environmental spoliation -- involving both human and physical geography (Park 1994:26-29; Houston 1978:229, 232-34).

The importance in geography of the relations between humans and nature or the environment was appreciated long ago. For some, geography is centered in or defined in terms of human ecology. Barrows believed that such disciplines as climatology and geomorphology did not properly belong in geography. Rather it is the mutual interactions between humans and the earth that characterize geography and perhaps distinguish it from geology (Barrows 1923:4, 12-14; Martin and James 1993:345). Expanding on this concept from a New Testament perspective, both divine and human concern for the creation would be or should be an essential geographical attitude.

An example of Christian attitudes toward the environment is related to the millennial passage in Revelation 20. Janel Curry-Roper showed that three different positions on those verses led to three different environmental perspectives. Dispensationalism teaches that world history is moving toward deterioration in society and nature. Although some dispensationalists advocate environmental stewardship, the emphasis on human history does not seem to provide much motivation for concern about nature. Postmillennialism teaches progressive improvement

in nature and history before Christ's return, a process which humans are responsible to assist. Since the earth is the home of humanity, this teaching inherently encourages responsible care for the environment. Amillennialism and historic premillennialism are grouped together, the main difference being the belief of the latter in a historical intermediate period of 1000 years. Both teach that Christ initiated a new age, but that the old evil age continues also until his return. Improvement in the world is limited in this age, yet Christians should work at restoration as a foretaste of the coming kingdom (Curry-Roper 1990:157-67). Although these tendencies are general and do not necessarily apply to all adherents of each position, one may perceive that one's belief about the role of the earth in salvation influences in theory one's ecological consciousness.

Although some Christians have attempted to support environmental exploitation with biblical citations, Protestant theologian Wesley Granberg-Michaelson believed that this approach to nature deviates from basic Christian teachings. Humans should maintain connections not only with God and with each other, but also with the natural world -- of which they are a part, formed from the dust of the earth. If we abuse the creation, we become alienated from God and from each other (Kinsley 1995:164-66).

A collection of essays, edited by Henk Aay and Sander Griffioen, included contributions by Christian geographers

discussing various topics relating to the importance of world view for geography. The selections reflected two different yet potentially interacting approaches for a Christian perspective on geography. One approach begins with a world view and seeks to discover the implications for the practice of geography. The other begins with the practice of geography and explores its implications for an implicit world view. The first approach may be called normative; the second, implicit. Several of the essays contain ideas pertinent to the purpose of this project (Aay and Griffioen 1998:xi-xiv).

The essay by Iain Wallace examined the challenge of reconciliation between global and local concerns. Rather than imposing universalistic models, it may be necessary in a complex world to allow more regional diversity. When we are open to differences, we attend to particular experiences perhaps not accommodated in monolithic frameworks -- including considerations of gender and ethnic biases. The author also noted the strain on the environment from an economy which "cannot grow indefinitely." For the affluent minority, the biblical sabbath and jubilee injunctions provide a model for an "ethic of moderation." On the seventh day God rested and was refreshed (Exodus 31:17), an example of self-control which humans are called on to follow. In the New Testament Jesus also observed that day (Wallace 1998:46-48).

Gerard Hoekveld drew a parallel between differentiation in regional geography and compensation for social injustices of the past. The last become first and the first last in a new balance; strict equality may not be present. This inequality may be reflected spatially or economically. The writer also advocated a simple yet often neglected inclusion in geographical studies -- the matter of good and evil. In historical geography, we should not only come to understand the past but to determine what was right or wrong in it. A similar remark applies to other disciplines in human geography.

The issue of the distinctiveness of a Christian perspective on geography Aay addressed in his chapter. In the context of Christian schools in the Netherlands from 1900 to 1960, he noted that a Christian geography should be more than a standard geography plus additional material on churches, missions, and other religious topics -- although the latter would be included as a distinguishing mark. He cited two positivist Christian authors who said that a Christian approach should infuse the content of geography across the entire spectrum of its subject matter; a genuinely Christian geography should be recognizable in its treatment of thunderstorms and soils, agriculture and houses, Nicaragua and Nepal (Aay 1998:106-07, 114-17). To resolve this challenge is difficult. One possible answer is that there is one true geography, much of which may be

understood at a physical and cultural level by non-Christians. It is not that secular geography is completely wrong but rather that it is incomplete. Christian spiritual/ethical insight may increase knowledge and guide appropriate action. For example, in physical geography one may come to appreciate the design and wisdom of the creator as seen and experienced in the creation. In the more distinctly human areas, a Christian approach has many opportunities to make a difference.

In another essay in the set, Curry-Roper discussed the world view of positivism -- an approach characterized by empirical observation, rationalism, reductionism, and formulation of explanatory and predictive laws. As applied in the natural and the social sciences, this method holds genuine knowledge to be objective and finds subjective expression to be unreliable. She believed that positivism -- including the feature of quantification in spatial analysis to seek generalizations -- had brought a loss of the sense of place and personal relations in geography. With place and subjectivity comes diversity. In striving for the universal, some have excluded the local (Curry-Roper 1998:49-53; Johnston 1997:33-34).

The dominance of positivism has broken down, however, being challenged by postmodernism -- featuring uniqueness, relativism, particularity, and incommensurability (Johnston 1997:271-81; Aay 1998:xiii-xiv). Representing another world

view, Christians may attempt to avoid the extremes of narrow exclusivism or unlimited diversity in the first two systems. One way to do so is to find grounding in a transcendent and immanent creator who encompasses both the objective and the subjective.

As examples of geographers uncomfortable with positivism, Curry-Roper cited Carl Sauer and Richard Hartshorne. Reality as found in areal diversity was too complex, thought Sauer, to submit to deterministic categorization. No single a priori causal hypothesis was adequate. The whole is not simply understood from an analysis of the individual parts. Humans act on the natural environment and shape it into a cultural landscape. Although he found multiformity or inherent diversity in both nature and culture, Sauer also sought regularities among places; his quest seems to have been for a balance between the unique and the universal. He was breaking with the environmental determinism of those preceding him (Martin and James 1993:345-49).

In two works, from 1939 and 1959, Hartshorne laid out his philosophy of the nature of geography. Earlier Bowman had noted the vast diversity among geographical regions. Concerned with areal differentiation, geography for Hartshorne endeavors to provide "description and interpretation of the variable character of the earth surface." This concept of geography as chorology goes back

to Ferdinand von Richthofen and Alfred Hettner. Hettner wrote of "the science of earth areas and places in terms of their difference and their spatial relations." He wished to understand the surface of the earth in its fullness by considering local or regional variations in an interconnected whole (Hartshorne 1959:13-14, 20-21; Martin and James 1993:362-65). Diversity in geography helps to make that field more difficult to define. In our study of geographical passages of the New Testament we found a diversity of approaches among its parts. The variety found in that document is reflected in the difficulty of systematizing its contents. The freshness of its events and places connects it with life as we experience it. Though we do not avoid attempts to generalize, it is difficult to do so. One of the more significant findings of the study is the parallel between the diversity found in the New Testament record and the diversity on the earth noted by Hartshorne and his chorological predecessors.

Related to the issue of diversity is another concern of Hartshorne -- whether geography is nomothetic or idiographic. Do we formulate general laws or describe specific cases? Varenus spoke of the matter in terms of general geography and special geography. Richthofen felt that we begin with observations in particular areas and then go on to seek more general principles. Hettner also believed that the two approaches must be combined. In the

opening chapter we outlined Hartshorne's position, which is a careful union of the two approaches. The immense diversity on the earth, the many blends of geographical features (both physical and human) make the generic task difficult. Over smaller units we may achieve more complex integration (regional geography); over larger units, more limited integration (topical geography). Despite our best efforts to achieve general understanding as expressed in laws or theories, it is not unusual to find residues that fall outside artificially imposed boundaries. Not easily can we attain to a synthesis comprehending all the facts. Despite his attempts at clarification, some (such as Fred Schaefer) believed that Hartshorne favored the idiographic approach (Hartshorne 1959: 170-73, 180-82; Martin and James 1993:166-68, 172-76, 371).

On the universal-particular issue, the New Testament seems to be sympathetic to an interplay between both tendencies. Many individual cases are cited, many examples are presented; the variety is large. Yet general ideas we also find, as well as the opportunity for humans to generalize further. Since the human spatial and temporal perspective is restricted, proposals for universal knowledge are tentative. Only at the divine level can we expect to find the reliably absolute.

The relation between physical and human geography has puzzled some. Are they two separate divisions of the field?



Should one or the other be excluded from geography?

Hartshorne believed that they should be considered together in geographical works in order to approach a more complete description of reality. Rarely can one isolate the natural and the human from one another. The position of geography on the boundary between the natural and the social sciences gives it an opportunity to promote convergence rather than divergence in human culture (Hartshorne 1959:79-80).

Although we attempted to structure our chapters by considering physical and human geography separately, we found that the geographical features are merged in the New Testament. One God created all things, including both nature and humanity. Humans are dependent on the land; in managing it, they also modify it. To consider the parts together enriches the whole.

#### Geography of Significance

Many potential issues and avenues of investigation are available to the geographer. In order to increase the quality of the research in the field, it is desirable to select carefully the finite number of projects undertaken from the infinite number of possibilities. If higher standards are applied, one may say that not all knowledge is of equal value. For idle or careless words spoken (and, possibly, written), we are accountable (Matthew 12:36).

In a presidential address to the Association of American Geographers, Wilbur Zelinsky discussed the model of

natural science -- with its assumptions of universal validity, objectivity, and causality. For the hard sciences, such a model may often be appropriate. But it has limited application in the social sciences, where we seek not only knowledge but also understanding. Although alternative models may not always give simple and single answers and may be short on facts, they may reveal and enlighten at a deeper level (Zelinsky 1975:123, 128-29, 141).

Similar were the concerns expressed in another presidential address by Norton Ginsburg, as he discussed relevancy and priority in research. He found that "much so-called theory in geography" is very "abstracted from reality." He spoke of "the increasing demand for rigor to cast light on trivia," so that "the most important questions tend not to be asked because they are the most difficult to answer." Reality is distorted when only a few of many variables are selected for analysis (Ginsburg 1973:1-4; Johnston 1997:320-22). A New Testament perspective on the matter might note that the world is temporary and is passing away (1 Corinthians 7:31; 1 John 2:17). Those realities which are enduring (2 Corinthians 4:18) may merit more inclusion in geographical studies. One might also question the value of repetitious studies of very similar cases.

Long ago God created the present heavens and earth. Yet though God endures, they will perish; wearing out like a

garment (Psalm 102:25-27; Isaiah 51:6), they are replaced by new heavens and a new earth (Isaiah 65:17; 66:22). We might review research of the past as reported in books and journals and ask how much of it has enduring value today. Then we might reflect and consider which potential studies or types of studies it would be worthwhile to undertake in the present. If we pursue the higher priority items first, we may find it unnecessary to pursue some of the others.

Concern with the apparently practical and contemporarily relevant has its dangers too, however. Some have pressed for more geographical involvement in poverty and various social issues (Chisholm 1971: 65-68; Prince 1971:152-53; Johnston 1997:323-24). Yet a place exists for disinterested academic research, which may be unexpectedly pertinent while maintaining the integrity of independence. Secular analysis of social problems often fails to uncover underlying causes through failure to consider the complex network of sin -- individual and corporate. In general, rather than treating symptoms, we should be probing for causes.

Critics of the quantitative method in geography include D. M. Smith who disdained the trivial output from the use of models and statistics with the relative neglect of human needs. D. Mercer found that the "technocratic thinking" typical of the quantitative style is faulty because reality is often contradictory rather than orderly. Others, such as

Bennett, promoted modeling, information systems, and quantitative spatial analysis as central to the study of economic and social problems (Smith 1984:131-32; Mercer 1984:194; Johnston 1997:262-63; 351-53).

What might a New Testament perspective be on the value of quantification? God is the architect, builder, and maintainer of a complex world -- which has both qualitative and quantitative aspects. His interest in numerics one may deduce from their presence in the text, both literal and symbolic. One may also find careful structure in the document. The hairs of our head are numbered. In either facet of existence one's work may be good or bad; one's application, right or wrong. Yet to explore reality comprehensively, one must attend to both object and subject, to both quantity and quality.

The interdisciplinary concern of geography for both nature and culture seems to qualify it to take a leading role in addressing environmental questions. Yet D. R. Stoddart felt that the field had strayed from its central focus, which should be "earth's diversity, its resources, man's survival on the planet." For this task a united physical and human geography should "identify geographical problems, issues of man and environment within regions." Our interest should be in "the big questions, about man, land, resources, human potential" rather than in issues of insignificance. R. W. Kates also believed that geography

should have contributed more decisively to the search for solutions to environmental problems (Stoddart 1987:328-34; Kates 1987:526, 532; Johnston 1997:338-42).

Biblical concern for the welfare of the physical and human creation testifies to a Christian commitment to care for the physical and human environment even if forces of corruption counter our efforts. One may set a partially successful example today in anticipation of a new and better geography in the world to come.

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## APPENDIX A

### A GEOGRAPHY OF PALESTINE

Despite its limited area, the country divides into a number of smaller districts significantly diverse. Referred to in this discussion either as Palestine or Israel, the land contains areas on both sides of the Jordan river. With the Mesopotamian regions to the north and Egypt to the south, the country forms a corridor as a crossroads between Asia and Africa. The salient topographical feature is an elevated ridge system. Four longitudinal (north to south) belts marked by differences in geomorphology, climate, and vegetation comprise the basic geography. From west to east between the Mediterranean Sea and the desert, the four belts are the coastal plain, the central (or western) highlands, the Jordan rift valley, and the eastern highlands (Baly 1974: 118-20).

Though narrow in the north, the coastal zone broadens toward the south as the coastline extends westward. A strip of shifting sand dunes generally characterizes the shoreline. At the ladder of Tyre, south of the cities of Tyre and Sidon, the hills of Upper Galilee approach the coast; the cliffs formed divide the Plain of Phoenicia (to the north) from the Plain of Acco. Although the first plain is only a few miles wide, suitable harbors dot the irregular coast. To the south of Mount Carmel (which projects close to the water) is the Plain of Dor, which widens into the

marshy Plain of Sharon, once covered with oak trees. The latter plain extends to the Valley of Aijalon, which reaches the sea near Joppa. To the south runs the Plain of Philistia, suitable for fields of wheat and barley. Although rainfall decreases in the south, grain crops are still possible as far as Gaza. Few natural harbors are available along the straight coastline south of Carmel. The name of the non-Israelite settlers (the Philistines) of the last plain later came to be applied to the entire country (Aharoni 1979:21-25).

While in its northerly extent in the Lebanon, the central highlands rise to over 6000 feet, the highest peak in Palestine (which is in Galilee) is less than 4000 feet. Relatively isolated from the main commercial traffic and from political centers, Galilee was blanketed by fruit trees and small villages. Upper Galilee (to the north) is a roughly eroded plateau with a multitude of springs but with no important cities in its interior. With fertile valleys leading to the coastal plain and to Jordan, Lower Galilee contains a series of east to west ridges, none more than 2000 feet high.

To the south of Galilee runs an important break in the central highlands from Acco on the coast to Bethlehem near the Jordan. The first of the plains in this west-to-east passage is the triangular Plain of Esdraelon, which (along with the Plain of Acco) is drained by the river Kishon.

Much narrower, the Plain of Jezreel to the east cuts toward the rift valley between Gilboa and Moreh, as it drops below sea level and merges into the Plain of Bethshan. Important cities in this area are Jokneam, Megiddo, Taanach, and Ibleam (Baly 1974:144-51).

The central part of the central highlands is the hill country of Ephraim, a broad limestone upland of fertile valleys and small plains. In the valleys wheat and grapes were cultivated with olives, figs, and other fruit trees on the slopes. Higher and more fruitful is the southern part of this area. To the east the land descends rapidly to the Jordan, as it forms an eroded wilderness (Aharoni 1979:27-29).

Although no distinct geographical feature separates the hill country of Ephraim from the hill country of Judah to the south, hills of the latter are less hospitable with their sparse vegetation and stony protrusions. As the rain diminishes toward the south, it becomes suitable mainly for grazing. To the east begins the wilderness of Judah -- with gorges, narrow wadis, and some pasture for the goats but little significant vegetation under the intense heat of the sun (Baly 1974:184).

Between the southern coastal plain and the Judean mountains lies the Shephelah, a lowland or foothill region extending from Aijalon southward. It was fortified by a series of fortresses against the Philistines and other

enemies. Several east-west valleys (Aijalon, Sorek, Elah, and Qubeibah) lead from the coast into the hills, being wider and more fertile in the Shephelah. In it are found grains, grapes, and olive and sycamore trees (Baly 1974:141-42).

Near the Valley of Beersheba and the Valley of Salt, as they cut across the central highlands begins the Negeb, a barren steppe merging into the desert. In the west are sand dunes and fertile loess, while a steep decline to the Arabah is in the east. In the western Negeb, settlement and agriculture are possible with restrictions. Problems include water and nomads from the nearby deserts; drought is frequent due to annual rainfall variations. Settlement was more possible with a strong and concerned government. Along river beds in the north more continuous settlements could exist; the usually dry wadis could collect water on rainy days. In the eastern Negeb the main cities were Arad and Hormah; yet for long periods, the population was primarily nomadic. Even small variations in temperature and precipitation may increase possibilities for agriculture and grazing (Aharoni 1979:26, 29-31).

The third geographical belt is the rift valley -- a long and deep depression in which the Jordan flows, fed by springs at the base of Mount Hermon. The first section of the Jordan rift is the Huleh valley, in which is Lake Huleh at about 230 feet above sea level. In the next ten miles

the Jordan drops to 695 feet below sea level at the Sea of Galilee, which is about thirteen miles long with a maximum width of seven miles. Narrow valleys with fertile alluvial soil surround the sea or lake. In the time of Jesus, a number of sizable towns (such as Capernaum, Tiberias, and Bethsaida) lay near its shores.

From the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea is the Jordan valley proper, known as the Ghor; the winding course of the river is about three times the air distance of seventy miles. For about twenty-five miles, there is enough rain for cultivation. Later a triple division of the rift appears. On either side sloping from the hills is the Ghor per se, with pasture and, if water is adequate, cultivation. Within the Ghor are the badlands of soft gray marl, known as the qattara. Uncultivated and difficult to explore, it is slippery after rain and crumbles when dry. Within the badlands is the narrow flood plain or the Zor with a dense and tangled vegetation of tamarisk and shrubs. Known also as a jungle, it provided habitat for lions in biblical times (May 1984:48; Baly 1974:196-200).

Few perennial rivers descend to the Jordan from the west; one is the Jalud in the Bethshan valley, another the Wadi Farah further south at Adam. From that point to the oasis at Jericho, the western side of the valley is nearly a desert. More rivers water the eastern side of the valley, including the Yarmuk and the Jabbok (Aharoni 1979:31-34).

The Jordan empties into the Dead Sea, whose high salt content (about a quarter of the total volume is composed of such minerals as the chlorides of magnesium, sodium, and potassium) stems from lack of a natural outlet and from evaporation. The surface is 1285 feet below sea level; the bottom, 1300 feet lower still. Valued today for its potash, the sea was a source of salt and bitumen in ancient times. On both sides high cliffs rise; the mostly narrow shore prevents passage -- especially on the eastern side, from which the boot-shaped Lisan peninsula (like the qattara in composition) extends. Heavy is the haze and unbearable the heat much of the time; yet there are also oases, such as the one at Engedi on the western shore. South of Engedi lies the isolated height at Masada.

Between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba (about 110 miles), the rift valley is called the Arabah -- a desert with perhaps one inch of annual rainfall. To the west lie the mountains of the Negeb, to the east the higher slopes of Edom. Only rarely has it been feasible to pursue agriculture there -- perhaps under economic pressure (Aharoni 1979:34-36; Baly 1974:202-06).

The eastern highlands in Transjordan constitute the fourth belt running north to south in Palestine. On the west, steep slopes descend to the rift valley. Because its high ridges intercept and cool the atmosphere, it has substantial rainfall; yet the rain decreases to the east as

the highlands blend with the desert. The northern fertile district of Bashan was noted for its cattle. The rugged mountain area of Gilead was partly forested and produced grain, grapes, and olives. The tableland of Moab was a territory for flocks of sheep. The most southerly part of the belt is Edom, where the altitude often exceeds 5000 feet. Not easily accessible and also protected by fortresses, it was able at times to maintain independence; yet at the other times it was dominated by a united Israel or by Judah (Aharoni 1979:36-41; Baly 1974:229-31).

## APPENDIX B

### A CLIMATOLOGY OF PALESTINE

Palestine lies at about the same latitude as the state of Georgia. The climate type for the area and for much of the Mediterranean may be considered as a class within the midlatitude west coast climatic classification and is frequently called the Mediterranean climate, or Cs in the Koppen system. This type usually occurs on the western sides of continents where dry and sunny summers occur beneath eastern ends of subtropical highs and wet winters beneath the polar-front jet as it shifts toward the equator. To understand the climate one should additionally note the following factors: 1. Palestinian location at the southeastern Mediterranean corner, where sea and desert nearly touch each other, 2. nearness of Sahara and Arabian deserts (with summer heat) and Russo-Siberian plains (with winter cold), 3. main north-south lines of topographical relief across the movement of winter cyclonic storms (Lydolph 1985:198).

The two major seasons in Palestine then are the dry summer and the variable-length rainy season in the cooler half of the year. Into briefer transitional seasons in spring and autumn the summer drought extends. The dry season lasts from about June 15 to September 15. Although eastern Mediterranean air movement in summer is from north to south, it is west to east over Palestine due to



deflection around a low over Cyprus. The warm upper air mass of the equatorial area and the jet stream are shifted northward. Yet the lower air mass over the sea is relatively cool, so that it tends not to rise; thus summer air conditions are stable. Though the air from the west is moist, it does not bring rain; but it does moderate the heat and bring dew along the coast and on western mountain slopes. Important for agriculture is the dew, especially in the drier regions of the south. Although the early hours of the day are usually calm, the heating of the land triggers a sea breeze. After sunset again the coastal air is calm, but a weaker land breeze begins later in the evening (Baly 1974:43-46).

In its beginning and its ending, in the quantity of rain, and in the distribution of rain during the season, the rainy season is unpredictable. Stratospheric air is chilled, while the waters of the Mediterranean and Red Seas and the Persian Gulf remain warm. While the jet stream moves southward, a trough of low pressure develops along the Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf between high pressure systems over nearby land masses. Cyclones move across the warm Mediterranean water stimulated by the encounter of warm African air and cooler European air and by the influence of the jet stream aloft. Rainfall may continue for about three days. In years of heavier rain, the cyclones succeed each other regularly; but in other years, continental high

pressure air outflow interrupts the pattern (Baly 1974:47-50; Zohary 1982:26-27; Hamel 1990:102-04).

The rainy season generally begins gradually near mid-October, tapers off in March, and ends near mid-April. Rain is heaviest on the coast in the early part of the season when air instability is greater. When air and sea temperatures come closer together later, rainfall is delayed until air is forced to ascend by the interior highlands. The highlands thus receive more rain in this colder period in January and February. Although most of the rain comes from December through February, both the early rains in the fall and the latter rains in the spring are important for agriculture -- for plowing and ripening respectively (May 1984:9-12).

From early April to mid-June and from mid-September to late October, the transitional seasons overlap the rainy season; two events characterize them. Firstly, when the high pressure over Arabia is not yet established or is beginning to dissipate, cyclones may extend further inland and bring desert storms. Secondly, the hot east wind (known as the sirocco) comes with rising temperatures, lower relative humidity, and sand and dust. More days of sirocco occur in the highlands than the lowlands, but with maximum annual temperatures for both. As in Hosea 13:15 and Isaiah 27:8, the dry wind from the desert was a symbol from nature for the wrath of God.

Palestinian weather has great variety due in part to topographical alternations and the conflict between sea and desert. Sharp contrasts in both temperature and precipitation may occur over short distances. Several principles help to specify differences among climatic regions. Rainfall generally decreases from north to south and also from west to east, i.e., with increasing distance from the sea. Rainfall increases on the westward slopes of mountains and hills and decreases on eastward or lee slopes. With an increase in height, temperature decreases. But the temperature range increases with distance from the sea and with decrease in rainfall (Baly 1974: 51-54).

## APPENDIX C

### A GEOGRAPHY OF ACTS

With the stoning of Stephen (7:58) in Jerusalem, persecution against the church scatters members throughout Judea and Samaria. Acts 8 records the work of Philip, Peter, and John in this area. First the gospel spreads north to Samaria and then south toward Gaza. In the latter case Philip is on the desert road from Jerusalem to Gaza, where he meets a eunuch of high governmental status from Ethiopia, which was in the upper Nile region. The eunuch is returning from Jerusalem, where he has gone to worship, and is reading from Isaiah in his chariot. Through direction of Philip by the Spirit, the eunuch accepts the message about Jesus. As they travel, they come upon water in this dry area; both of them go down into the water for the eunuch's baptism. The eunuch continues on his way, but Philip is supernaturally translocated to Azotus, the Philistine city of Ashdod, north of Gaza. He evangelizes in other towns to the north until he reaches Caesarea. Although at one point Philip's travel is not limited by normal spatial constraints, the geographical features in this passage are treated naturally without explicit figurative meaning (Krodel 1986:166-71).

Jerusalem was inland in the highlands, its communications with the coast not being strong. Thus when Palestine became part of the Roman Empire, although Jerusalem retained its spiritual significance, Caesarea on

the coast became important politically and commercially. The religious role of Jerusalem actually hindered its development for government and trade.

Caesarea became the normal residence of the Roman governor and the site for the larger part of the Roman garrison. Its location was originally occupied by the stronghold called Strato's Tower, which was later allocated to Herod the Great. He developed the city extensively in the Hellenistic style, naming it as a compliment to the emperor. He built both a theater and an amphitheater; the latter appears to have been quite large, although the former had a better view of the sea. While he also added a palace and public buildings, perhaps the most impressive project was the sheltered harbor; an enormous effort was involved in sinking masses of rock for foundations and in preparing an elaborate sewage system. Thus Herod met his needs for a suitable Mediterranean port, its official name becoming Caesarea Maritima (Wallace and Williams 1998:153-61).

Among the most remarkable events in early church history is the dramatic conversion of Saul of Tarsus, later the apostle Paul, on the road from Jerusalem to Damascus. Recounted three times in Acts, this experience turns a violent enemy of the faith into a determined proclaimer. After Jesus appears to him, he loses his vision for three days and is led into the city by his companions. He receives the Holy Spirit and preaches that Jesus is the

Christ and the Son of God. When his opponents threaten his life, he leaves Damascus and returns to Jerusalem. Again later for the same reason, he is forced to leave Jerusalem and returns to his birthplace in Tarsus.

Damascus is reputed to be the oldest continuously inhabited city in the world. One of the cities of the Decapolis, it is a large oasis on the edge of the desert and is on a north-south route through Syria and Palestine. The city became Hellenized by Paul's time; on his entry, he is taken to a house on the street called Straight (9:11). The name may come from the grid pattern found in that part of Damascus in contrast to the winding streets in the older town (Wallace and Williams 1998:161-64).

In Cilicia in southeastern Asia Minor, Tarsus on the river Kydnos is in a large, fertile plain. It is on the route from the Cilician Gates (a pass leading to the Anatolian plateau) to Syria. After Alexander's conquests, it became Hellenized -- later coming under Roman rule. It was a significant city both culturally and commercially (Wilson 1997:23-25; Wallace and Williams 1998:180-82; Conzelmann 1987:75).

After Saul's conversion, the gospel spreads outside Palestine to such places as Antioch in Syria, where disciples are first called Christians (11:26). Barnabas goes to Tarsus for Saul and brings him back to Antioch. Both of them are set apart by the Spirit for the work to

which they are called. Then they leave on the beginning of Saul's extensive missionary ministry (13:4), which is the subject of the remainder of Acts. Soon the text indicates that he is also called Paul, his name for the rest of the historical narrative.

Antioch was the third largest city in the Roman world after Rome and Alexandria. Its site is at a point where the river Orontes turns away from the mountains; the main settlement was between mountain and river. It controlled a river crossing and had a good supply of water as well as a climate enhanced by mountain breezes. Yet it was susceptible to flooding during the heavy rains of the winter. In addition, the region was prone to earthquakes, which caused destruction at various times. Because Mount Silpius overlooked the city, it was difficult to defend. What produce the neighborhood of the city yielded could be supplemented by that from the fertile hinterland brought by smaller boats on the Orontes, which was less navigable further inland. As with many Hellenistic cities, Antioch featured a grid-plan and was a center for athletic games. The Greek-speaking population of the city contrasted with the Syrian-speaking population in the countryside (Wilson 1997:118; Wallace and Williams 1998:167-71).

Paul's ministry is frequently divided into three missionary journeys and a journey to Rome, all as recorded in Acts. Some believe that he took a fourth missionary

journey not recorded in Acts following release from prison in Rome. That Acts is one of three New Testament books which does not conclude with an amen in the Byzantine text has led some to propose that the book as we now have it may be incomplete. For each of the trips in the text of Acts, we outline the itinerary and then detail some of the background geography.

All three missionary journeys begin from Antioch (in Syria). In the first one, Paul and Barnabas go to Seleucia, the seaport of Antioch, and sail for Cyprus. They land at Salamis on the eastern side and travel through the island to the western side at Paphos. From there they sail north to reach Perga in Pamphylia, a province in Asia Minor. At this point their traveling associate John Mark, the cousin of Barnabas and the author of the second gospel, leaves them and returns to Jerusalem. The next recorded stop is at another Antioch, well inland and in or near the district of Pisidia. Here as Paul regularly does, he preaches first in the synagogue. While some are receptive, others are not; the missionaries are expelled from the area and go east to Iconium in the province of Galatia.

The response in Iconium is again mixed. They move on to Lystra, where Paul is stoned and left for dead; yet he arises and returns to the city, leaving the next day for Derbe, still in Galatia. Paul and Barnabas retrace their route back to Lystra, Iconium, Antioch, and Perga. They



sail from the port of Attalia for Antioch (in Syria), where they report on the progress of the Gentile mission and remain for an indefinite period of some length.

After Cyprus was annexed by the Romans, it was governed as part of the province of Cilicia; later it became a province itself. Except for its copper mines, it was relatively insignificant; it was neither on a major route nor on a frontier. Salamis was a Greek city on the island; the first harbor had become unusable from silting, so that Paul's city was on another site to the north. The Hellenization of the island in general, which left few traces of the earlier Phoenician culture, is reflected in the architecture in both Salamis and Paphos. The main religious center on Cyprus was the temple of Aphrodite in the old city of Paphos (Wallace and Williams 1998:182-85).

Pisidian Antioch had become the most important Roman colony of Asia Minor in Paul's day. The mostly Italian veterans of two legions were the original settlers. As with other colonies, Antioch was a microcosm of Rome -- Latin-speaking with political institutions on the Roman model. Widespread and fertile the city's surroundings seem to have been. Its important trading role stemmed from its position on the road from Ephesus to Syria.

Travel from Perga to Antioch took Paul through dangerous mountain territory. These conditions continued on the road to Iconium, which adopted Greek institutions in the

Hellenistic period and became a Roman colony under Augustus. The small town of Lystra was another colony, serving apparently to protect a highway. That the local Lycaonian language was still spoken there and that no synagogue is mentioned suggest a relatively remote location. The town of Derbe on the edge of the Taurus mountains was not a Roman colony (Wallace and Williams 1998: 190-92; Conzelmann 1987:103).

While Paul and Barnabas are in Antioch after the first journey, a major dispute arises concerning the status of Gentiles with respect to circumcision and the law of Moses. The two missionaries and others go to Jerusalem for a conference to consider the matter. When a decision is reached, the two leaders return to Antioch to deliver the results to the people there. Later a contention between Paul and Barnabas leads to their separation. Barnabas and Mark sail to Cyprus, while Paul and Silas begin Paul's second missionary journey by visiting churches in Syria and Cilicia.

Continuing by land, Paul and Silas reach Derbe and Lystra and then the region of Phrygia and Galatia. After the Spirit forbids them to preach in the province of Asia, they reach the coast of Troas; in response to a vision they prepare to sail for the province of Macedonia. Landing at the port of Neapolis, they proceed to Philippi. Later they move on land further west to Thessalonica and Berea.

Persecution in Berea from residents of Thessalonica leads Paul to depart for Athens in the province of Achaia. He continues on to Corinth, where he remains for perhaps about eighteen months. He sails for Ephesus in Asia Minor but leaves there by sea for Caesarea. After visiting the church at Jerusalem, he completes the second journey by returning to Antioch in Syria.

In the area near Philippi were deposits of silver and gold. The mines were seized by Philip of Macedon, who named the settlement nearby after himself. The income from the mines enabled him to finance part of his conquest of Greece and his son Alexander to begin his conquest of the Persian empire. Philippi continued as a simple mining town, however. Later under the Romans, an early governor built a road to link the Adriatic and Aegean. Apparently Paul took this road, the Via Egnatia, from Neapolis to Philippi. In 42 B.C. Marcus Antonius and Octavian (later Augustus) defeated the murderers of Caesar (Brutus and Cassius). After Octavian defeated Antonius, he confiscated the land of some of the loser's soldiers in Italy and settled them in Philippi. As a Roman colony, it had freedom from taxation, with praetors and lictors as authorities. Of the four districts of Macedonia, Philippi was in the first one; its leading city was Amphipolis, through which Paul passed en route to Thessalonica (Wallace and Williams 1998:206-07; Krodel 1986:306).

Following the death of Alexander, his kingdom was divided -- with Macedonia falling under the control of Cassander, who founded Thessalonica. Contributing to economic welfare of that city were its excellent harbor facilities, its location on the Via Egnatia, and its position as capital of its district and of the province of Macedonia. Under Roman rule it was a free city, with its magistrates called politarchs (Acts 17:6). As a new city, it attracted a cosmopolitan population -- including a large Jewish community, which gave Paul a point of contact. Berea was southwest of Thessalonica in another district of Macedonia. It was the meeting place of the Macedonian league, whose function under the Romans was to organize the imperial worship (Wallace and Williams 1998:209-10; Krodel 1986:316).

After Philip established Macedonian dominance over Greece, Athens declined in political, military, and economic importance. Yet it continued as the symbol of Greek culture, philosophy, and religion. Its dialect became the basis for koine Greek; certain Athenian authors were models for Greek style. In Paul's time it was a site of festivals and still the classical university city. Tourists came to see where Socrates and Plato had taught and viewed the Parthenon and temples in the city. In 88-87 B.C. it was involved in a war against Rome. In 86 B.C. the Roman general Sulla besieged it and imposed a constitution. Under

Augustus a building program altered the city -- especially the main open space (the agora), the center of commercial and social life. A new market area developed near it, known as the Roman agora (Wallace and Williams 1998:210-14; Krodell 1986:323; Conzelmann 1987:138; Wilson 1997:153).

Corinth is located on a narrow isthmus connecting the mainland with the Peloponnesian peninsula. It was thus able to control land traffic along the isthmus and sea trade across it. The ports of Lechaion and Cenchreae were on opposite sides of the isthmus; a paved causeway three or four miles long, the diolkos, permitted cargo and smaller ships to be dragged across the land passage/barrier. The city also had a natural fortress, the mountain known as the Acrocorinth. Corinth was destroyed by the Romans in 146 B.C. but was refounded as a Roman colony by Julius Caesar in 46 B.C. The fertile land around Corinth combined with its commercial importance had made the pre-Roman city wealthy and known for luxurious living, having a reputation for immorality. Among its buildings was the temple of Aphrodite. Not only discharged soldiers but also non-Roman settlers were included in its diverse population (Krodell 1986:340-41; Wallace and Williams 1998:214-16; Conzelmann 1987:151; Wilson 1997:159-61).

The third missionary journey begins with travel through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, followed by a path through the interior to Ephesus, where Paul remains for over

two years. He then goes through Macedonia and into Achaia. Because a plot is made against him, he goes back through Macedonia. From Philippi he sails to Troas in Asia Minor and makes a few stops as he proceeds by sea to Miletus. There he calls for the elders of the church at Ephesus; upon their arrival, he delivers a farewell address to them. He continues to sail -- with landings at Tyre, Ptolemais, and Caesarea and perhaps at other locations. To conclude this third journey, he takes some of the disciples from Caesarea with him to Jerusalem.

Ephesus came under Roman control in 133 B.C. As a consequence of the defeat of Mithridates following his revolt of 88 B.C., it lost its status as a free city. Later following civil wars, peace was established under the reign of Augustus; its subsequent prosperity permitted the undertaking of building programs. Many of the structures were erected at the expense of private persons. The theater is at the head of the road leading to the harbor, which is gone due to silting; that area became swampy ground. The temple of Artemis, one of seven wonders of the ancient world, had 127 columns and was decorated with sculpture. At a height of sixty feet, it stood on flat ground outside the city. One month of each year was dedicated to the worship of Artemis (Diana to the Romans); Artemisian festivals also occurred in other towns in the region. More than spiritual was the influence of this goddess; she was also a major

landowner. Her temple functioned as a bank and also had the right of asylum and the right to be an heir in a will (Wilson 1997:181-83; Wallace and Williams 1998:194-99).

Troas (more fully Alexandria Troas) was originally founded by Alexander's general Antigonos under another name and was refounded as a Roman colony by Augustus. Although its harbor was artificial, it was an important city in the area. This was due in part to its site near the Dardanelles and at a short sea crossing from Asia to Europe.

Although Miletus is now about five miles inland due to silting, in ancient times it was an important port and trading city. After destruction by the Persians, it was rebuilt but without regaining its former prosperity. Under Roman rule it was a free city; extensive new construction also took place (Wallace and Williams 1998:199-202).

Once one of the great cities of the Mediterranean, Tyre (with other Phoenician cities) dominated sea trade and established settlements further west, notably the colony of Carthage. Not only were they seafarers but the Tyrians also had trading connections by land to the east. The city was built on an island with artificial harbors. When Tyre resisted Alexander, it was taken after a long siege -- during which he constructed a causeway connecting island and mainland. Despite the conquest and later additional disturbances, the city recovered. A purple dye from local shellfish was its most famous product. The demand for it

increased, so that by Paul's day Tyre was a significant industrial and market city. Yet its trading activities were not equal to those in its former heyday (Wallace and Williams 1998:173-75).

The cedars of Lebanon from the mountains north of Palestine were noted for fragrance, durability, and beauty. Excessive use for construction, however, led to environmental degradation of the forests. In the pyramid age in Egypt, cedar wood was prized for its use in objects buried with the body. Egyptian use continued later -- by Thutmose III for his palace and by Ramses II for the temple at Thebes. The Phoenicians also used cedar in ship construction for the Egyptians. Mesopotamian use includes that of Tiglath Pileser I, who cut timber for temples of his gods. Esarhaddon suppressed a rebellion in Phoenicia and obtained cedar for his palace. A series of bas-reliefs from the palace of Sargon II at Khorsabad shows logs being cut and transported to the Euphrates. An inscription of Nebuchadnezzar II on the northeastern slope of Mount Lebanon discusses the collection of cedar timber.

David used cedar in the construction of his palace. Hiram, king of Tyre, sent cedar and skilled craftsmen to work with Solomon's laborers in building the temple at Jerusalem. Solomon also used cedar extensively for his private house, the palace of the forest of Lebanon. The Roman emperor Hadrian attempted to limit forest use by



engraving orders on the rocks of Lebanon to prohibit the cutting of trees that he wanted to preserve for Roman shipbuilding. However, the inscriptions may not have been effective since many of them remain on rocks on mountains destitute of forest. Thus the story of the cedars of Lebanon is one of ecological destruction by a number of peoples over a long period of time (Zohary 1982:104-05; Chaney and Basbous 1978:119-20; Mikesell 1969:14-19).

After Paul arrives in Jerusalem, visitors from the province of Asia incite the crowd against him. After his arrest, he speaks to the crowd and then appears before the sanhedrin. When a plot to kill him is discovered, he is transferred to Caesarea; there he appears before two governors (Felix and Festus) and king Agrippa. As a Roman citizen Paul appeals his case to Caesar. He is shipwrecked on the way to Rome, reaching the island of Malta. After three months, he embarks again and passes through Syracuse on Sicily and Rhegium on the Italian mainland. Soon he arrives in Rome and remains there under guard awaiting trial for two years as the book of Acts closes.

The site of Rome, the capital of the huge empire, is not especially attractive. Because of marshy ground, the climate was unhealthy and damp. Although Augustus pursued a program of construction, later emperors were responsible for major buildings often associated with ancient Rome. The increasing population frequently found housing of poor

quality, with fires a regular danger. A large non-Italian population, including freed slaves and immigrants, resided in the city in Paul's day (Wallace and Williams 1998:221-22).

## APPENDIX D

### MAPS

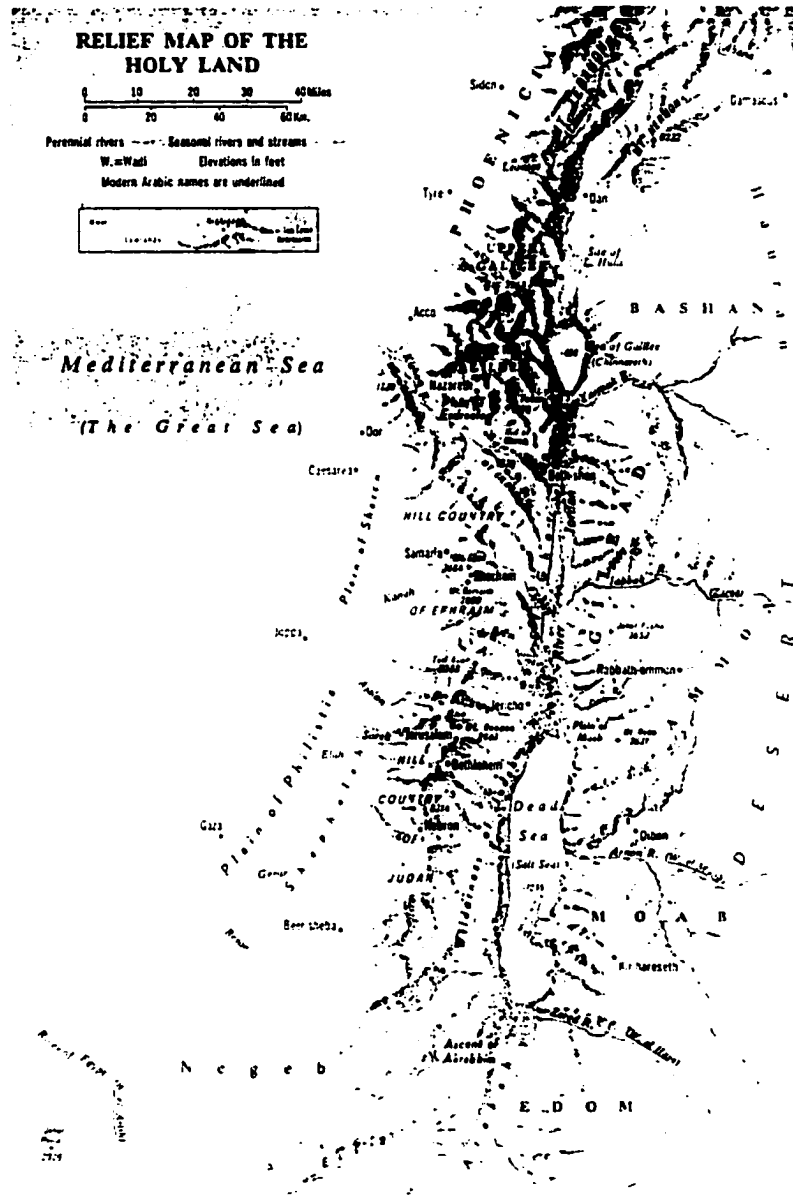


Figure 1. Relief Map of the Holy Land (Taken from Miller and Miller 1973).



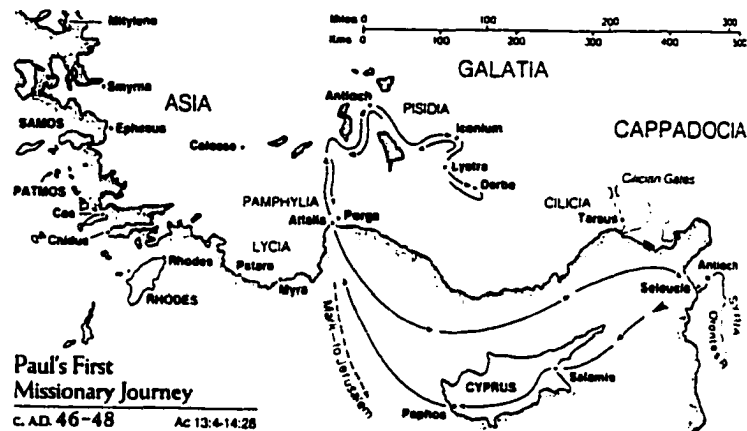


Figure 3. Paul's First Missionary Journey (Taken from Barker 1985).

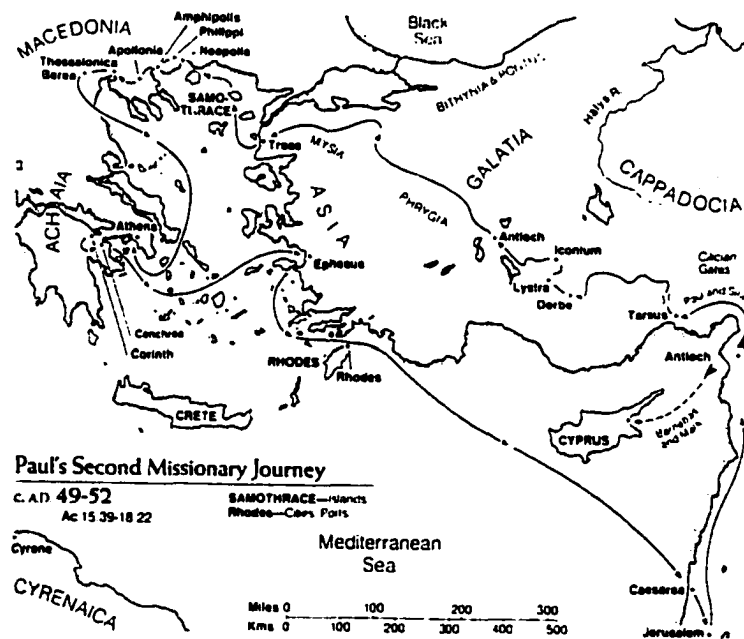


Figure 4. Paul's Second Missionary Journey (Taken from Barker 1985).

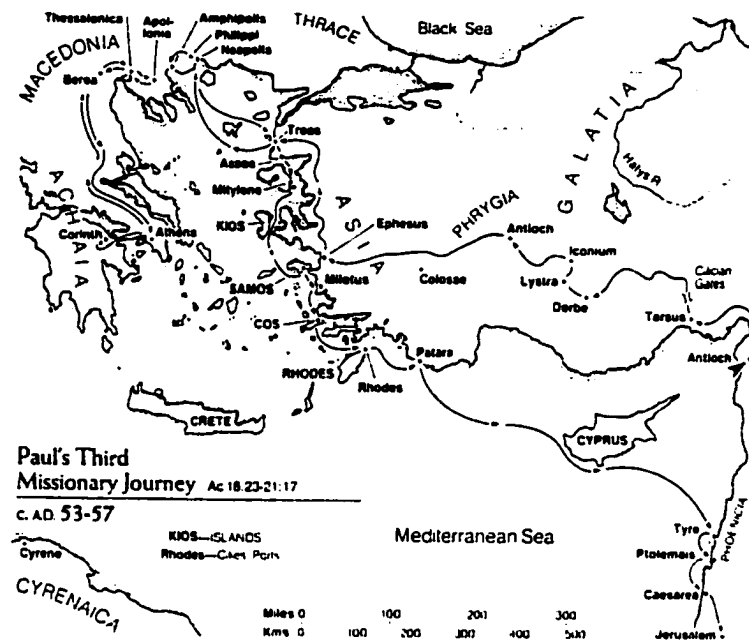


Figure 5. Paul's Third Missionary Journey (Taken from Barker 1985).

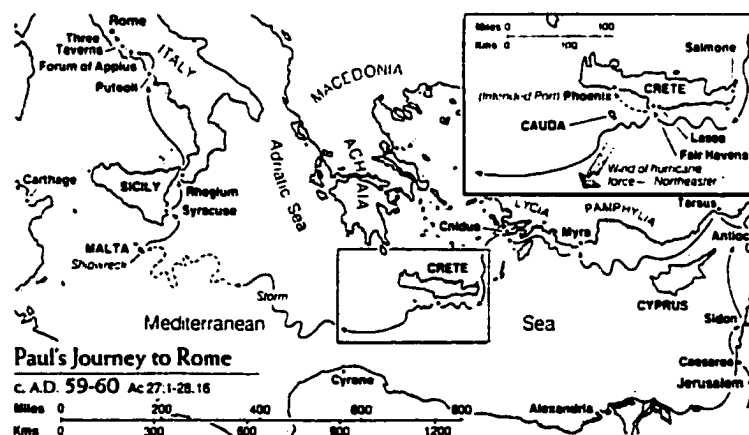


Figure 6. Paul's Journey to Rome (Taken from Barker 1985).

## VITA

From his early years two dimensions of existence, both relevant to this dissertation, have been highly influential in the life of George Alphin -- the spiritual and academic. The first is the most important feature in his life and is represented more specifically by the Christian faith -- which addresses and answers two fundamental questions, those of sin and death. The first question concerns the moral issue -- that of good and evil or right and wrong; the second, the nature of human life. He knows that he, like others, has failed to attain to universal religious-ethical standards; what judgment should he expect? He also anticipates that he, like others, will die; is there life after death? He believes that the Bible decisively answers the two fundamental questions in the two major historical events which it records -- the crucifixion and the resurrection, respectively.

Across the academic spectrum, he is interested in learning the content of the basic fields of knowledge in the universe. In the natural sciences these include chemistry, biology, and mathematics; in the social sciences -- political science, psychology, and sociology; and in the humanities -- art, philosophy, and music. Although he neglects not application, more fundamentally he attends to understanding. Formally and informally, this educational

pursuit has occupied much of the time and energy of his days and years, ideally under divine supervision.

Not only the way things are (the real) but also the way they should or could be (the ideal) has concerned him. This dissertation has provided an occasion for him to explore (1) the connections between the two major fields of religion and geography and (2) the consequences of the insights of the former for the pure form of the latter. The nature of this project indexes the nature of his personality; its results he considers tentative and subject to correction.



# DOCTORAL EXAMINATION AND DISSERTATION REPORT

**Candidate:** George Alphin

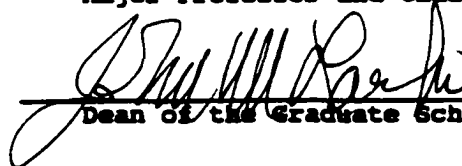
**Major Field:** Geography

**Title of Dissertation:** A New Testament Geography: Description,  
Perspectives, and Implications for the Field  
of Geography

**Approved:**

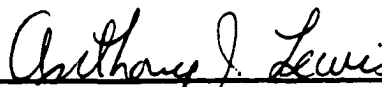


Major Professor and Chairman

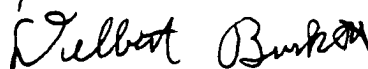


Dean of the Graduate School

## EXAMINING COMMITTEE:









**Date of Examination:**

02/21/01